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In This Issue

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HELPING HONORS STUDENTS IN TROUBLE

JOURNAL EDITORS
ADA LONG
DAIL MULLINS
UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

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Editorial Policy

Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council is a refereed periodical publishing scholarly articles on honors education. The journal uses a double-blind peer review process. Articles may include analyses of trends in teaching methodology, articles on interdisciplinary efforts, discussions of problems common to honors programs, items on the national higher education agenda, and presentations of emergent issues relevant to honors education. Submissions and inquiries should be directed to Ada Long at adalong@uab.edu.

Deadlines

March 1 (for spring/summer issue); September 1 (for fall/winter issue)

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Ada Long (University of Alabama at Birmingham, Former Honors Director and Emerita Professor of English) and Dail Mullins (University of Alabama at Birmingham, Former Associate Honors Director and Emeritus Associate Professor of Curriculum & Instruction, with Ph.D. in Biochemistry); Managing Editor, Mitch Pruitt (Wake Up Graphics); Production Editor, Cliff Jefferson (Wake Up Graphics)

Editorial Board

CONTENTS

FORUM ON "HELPING HONORS STUDENTS IN TROUBLE"

RESEARCH ESSAYS

The cover image is Cliff Jefferson's adaptation of the Safe Zone logo at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. The Safe Zone project at UAB and many other college campuses was developed to identify safe havens for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students. Faculty and staff post the logo on their door to welcome all students in need of acceptance, support, and respect.

Call for Papers

The next issue of *JNCHC* (**deadline: March 1, 2011**) invites research essays on any topic of interest to the honors community.

The issue will also include a Forum focused on the theme "Honors Study Abroad." We invite essays of roughly a thousand words that consider this theme in the context of your campus and/or a national context.

The lead essay for the Forum (available on the NCHC website) is by Carolyn Haynes, Director of the Miami University (Ohio) Honors Program. Her essay presents both the benefits and potential drawbacks of study abroad, including suggestions for enhancing the benefits and limiting the drawbacks. Contributions to the Forum may—but need not—respond to her essay or the issues she addresses.

Questions to consider might include: What differentiates honors study abroad from other study abroad programs? What strategies succeed in making honors students effective ambassadors rather than ugly Americans? What are—or should be—the goals of honors study abroad? Should honors students be required to learn the language before studying in a non-English-speaking country? Do honors study abroad programs discriminate against students who cannot afford the expense? What should be the essential components of an honors study abroad program? What are the benefits and liabilities of programs that require home residence? Should teachers ideally be from the student's home institution or from the country being visited? Is the whole study abroad movement just another fad in U.S. higher education?

Forum essays should focus on ideas, concepts, and/or opinions related to "Honors Study Abroad." Examples from one's own campus can be and usually are relevant, but essays should not simply be descriptions of "what we do at our institution."

Please send all submissions to Ada Long at adalong@uab.edu.

Submission Guidelines

We accept material by e-mail attachment. We do not accept material by fax or hard copy.

The documentation style can be whatever is appropriate to the author's primary discipline or approach (MLA, APA, etc.), but please avoid footnotes. Internal citation to a list of references (bibliography) is strongly preferred, and the editor will revise all internal citations in accordance with MLA guidelines.

There are no minimum or maximum length requirements; the length should be dictated by the topic and its most effective presentation.

Accepted essays are edited for grammatical and typographical errors and for infelicities of style or presentation. Authors have ample opportunity to review and approve edited manuscripts before publication.

Submissions and inquiries should be directed to Ada Long at adalong@uab.edu or, if necessary, 850.927.3776.

DEDICATION

CHARLES (JACK) DUDLEY

As this issue of *JNCHC* goes to press, Jack Dudley is beginning the fifty-third fall semester of his academic career (from freshman through honors director to retired part-time instructor) and is at least a contender for the NCHC record. Having earned his bachelor's degree at the University of Georgia and Ph.D. from the University of Oregon, Jack started his teaching career back at his *alma mater* before joining the faculty of Virginia Tech University in the Department of Sociology. He was appointed Director of the Virginia Tech Honors Program in 1990, a position he retained until his recent retirement—but not retirement from teaching. During that time he built the VT program into a complex and highly successful honors adventure for its students, increasing the number of graduates from six in 1990 to 146 in 2008, accruing a substantial endowment for the program, and instituting residential honors communities. His students have won numerous and wide-ranging national fellowships such as the Marshall and Rhodes, and Jack has picked up his own share of impressive awards for the quality of his teaching. His classes and research interests have included the theory of motion in social systems, the sociology of family, and political sociology. He has also produced four films and served as consultant or co-director for numerous theatrical productions.

Those of us in the NCHC know Jack best for the consulting services he provides throughout our annual conferences—not as much the formal consulting that takes place in conference rooms but the kind that takes place in the lobbies and lounges and local hang-outs. Every time I see Jack—and I see him frequently—he is sitting down with a new honors director and sharing his considerable wisdom.

Jack's wisdom was invaluable during and after the horrible events at Virginia Tech on Monday, April 16, 2007. The essay he published in the

summer/spring 2007 issue of *JNCHC* and the lead essay that we have the privilege of publishing in this issue's Forum on "Helping Honors Students in Trouble" are testimony to the intelligence and compassion he has contributed to honors at the institutional, regional, and national levels for the past two decades.

Editor's Introduction

Ada Long
University of Alabama at Birmingham

As the terrible news came across our screens on April 16, 2007, honors administrators across the country thought with sympathy and horror of Charles (Jack) Dudley and his students in the Virginia Tech University Honors Program. Eventually we learned that our worries were sadly justified and that three of Jack's honors students had been killed, one had been wounded, and all had been traumatized. Our thoughts and messages flowed toward Jack on that day and the days following as we all felt sorrow for him and his students and at the same time felt the terrifying possibility that we might find ourselves in a similar position some day.

Since that terrible day, major traumas have, alas, occurred on other campuses, but most of us have only had to imagine how we would react and how we might help our students. At the same time, honors teachers and administrators try every day to find ways to help troubled students in different kinds of crises both large and small. The troubles typically do not attract national attention and may not seem dire to anyone other than the honors students suffering them, but the troubles are nonetheless urgent to the students, who often bring their problems—or, worse, do not bring them—to the honors staff, faculty, directors, deans, and advisors who might be able to help.

We all know that no easy formulas exist to guide us when a crisis occurs or when distressed students show up at our office door, but this issue's Forum on "Helping Honors Students in Trouble" provides a variety of insights, perspectives, and advice that might help us help our students. The one dominant theme throughout the essays is the importance of open and respectful communication, a theme that begins in the lead essay.

The Forum begins with "Managing Trouble in Troubled Times: A Responsibility of Honors," an essay by Charles (Jack) Dudley, to whom this issue of *JNCHC* is dedicated. Having suffered the terrible catastrophe of the Virginia Tech massacre, Dudley suggests and also models the kind of civil discourse that can possibly help prevent serious troubles for our students and, if not, can help address these troubles. He suggests a calm, rational collegiality wherein students and faculty respect and help each other as responsible adults. Dudley provides wisdom for helping students not only in major crises but in all troubles great and small.

In "Crisis in the Wilderness," Joan Digby, of the C. W. Post Campus, Long Island University, provides a fine example of the kind of collegiality that Dudley has suggested. She recounts a potentially dire event that occurred during a Partners in the Parks adventure at Denali National Park in Alaska this past summer. A student became gravely ill, but, because of thorough preparation for possible emergencies as well as generous attention from a park ranger, catastrophe was averted. Digby's first principle for crisis management echoes Dudley's and foreshadows the advice of several of the essays that follow: make students comfortable with sharing their problems.

Like Digby, Angela M. Salas, in "Helping Honors Students in Trouble," makes the crucial points that we can only help our students if we know what their troubles are and that students often do not tell us or want us to know. She describes her use of the Noel-Levitz inventories and follow-up discussions at Indiana University Southeast to help students open up about problems that are disrupting their studies and their lives. She provides examples, sure to resonate with many among us, of problems she has discovered and of ways she was able to help students solve them.

Salas has pointed out that students typically keep their troubles secret, and in the next essay—"'Help, I Need Somebody': Rethinking How We Conceptualize Honors"—Richard Badenhausen of Westminster College in Utah discusses why honors students are so secretive and so reluctant to seek help. After identifying specific reasons that honors students feel especially hesitant to open up about their problems, Badenhausen provides useful and insightful suggestions for honors administrators and teachers in their efforts to discover these problems and solve them. The solutions suggested by both Badenhausen and Salas merit careful consideration by all readers of *JNCHC*.

In keeping with the major themes of the previous four essays, Margaret Walsh emphasizes the importance of listening to students and respecting their opinions. In "Listening Lessons," Walsh builds on advice that her current honors students at Keene State College have offered to incoming students in order to suggest ways for honors administrators and teachers to offer a strong foundation for their students; such a foundation, she contends, allows students to handle the troubles that they—like all other students—are bound to experience.

The notion that honors students are like all students in needing help is the focus of "Honors Students in Crisis: Four Thoughts from the Field" by Eric W. Owens of Duquesne University and Michael Giazzoni of the University of Pittsburgh. The authors investigate assumptions that honors faculty and administrators might make about their students and suggest that such assumptions may be misleading or downright wrong. Owens and Giazzoni explain ways that honors students may be different from their non-honors colleagues

and thus require special kinds of help, but they warn against assuming that honors students need less help than other students.

One way that honors students may be different from other students is their more pronounced fear of failure. Bonnie Irwin of Eastern Illinois University confronts this difference head-on in "Hitting the Wall." She describes the value of failure in a good education, providing four lessons that can teach our high-achieving students—and remind ourselves—that failure is an opportunity to learn and grow in a way that success is not.

The final essay in the Forum—"The Balkanization of University Support Systems: FERPA's Chilling Effect on Campuses and How Honors Administrators Can Break the Ice" by Amy Beth Cyphert and Keith Garbutt of West Virginia University—explores the importance of communication between different units within a college or university in identifying and helping students at risk. The authors focus first on the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 ("FERPA") and its effect of hampering communication. The laws changed after the Virginia Tech tragedy so that communication is now more open. Honors administrators especially need to be familiar with the new laws since they work closely with their students and depend on open communication to help students in trouble.

This issue of JNCHC concludes with two research essays. In "What is Expected of Twenty-First-Century Honors Students: An Analysis of an Integrative Learning Experience," Celia López-Chávez and Ursula L. Shepherd describe an integrative learning program they developed at the University of New Mexico. Combining two honors seminars, one on biogeography and the other on social sciences, the two faculty members developed a program called From the Rockies to the Andes, which focused on achieving the outcomes encouraged by the Association of American Colleges and Universities and the additional goals of intentional teaching and international education. The authors define their terms, their goals, and their success in this course that took place in both New Mexico and Argentina, including their strategies for qualitative assessment.

The concluding essay—"Honors Programs in Four-Year Institutions in the Northeast: A Preliminary Survey toward a National Inventory of Honors" by Richard England of Salisbury University—presents a survey of institutions in the Northeast that do and do not have honors programs and colleges, a survey that he hopes will become the foundation for other regional and national studies. The strategy here is clear and easy to replicate: an Internet search with precise limitations and then application of some basic traits—e.g., size of institution, Carnegie classification, and selectivity—in order to identify what kinds of institutions are more or less likely to have honors programs. This kind of data can be useful to individual honors administrators as well as the NCHC in determining where honors is and is not prevalent in the

United States. The editors of *JNCHC*, along with Richard England, hope that honors administrators, staff, and students across the country will complete the work that he has begun so that we can all benefit from a greater understanding of the role of honors in higher education.

Forum on "Helping Honors Students in Trouble"

Managing Trouble in Troubled Times: A Responsibility of Honors

Charles (Jack) Dudley
Virginia Tech University

Collegiality that exists among people bound together for common purpose requires mutual respect and willingness to support each other's work. Such collegiality is not about friendship, even though friendships may occur, nor does it necessitate agreement to seek the same goals; instead, it implies a collection of scholars pursuing a life of the mind, each seeking to foster the civility that such a life demands. The preparation for assisting students in trouble begins with our willingness to recognize them as colleagues. In the terrible days at Virginia Tech following April 16, 2007, we found solace and solutions in our collegiality.

The best approach to honors students is to acknowledge that they are fully operating adults. This approach is the only and best way to confront the troubles that interrupt academic progress. Trouble requires either capitulation or growth. In a society that treats college as preparation for a job, honors holds out the hope that we can accomplish the crucial task of helping young people become strong and moral leaders in all areas of life. How we assist them achieve such a status determines our success and integrity as a special component of a university. The willingness and courage of our young honors students often defies our expectations, but what they wish for more than anything is that someone—often us—"have their back."

What we have to offer as academics is the application of reason to the problems our students face. Of course as humans we offer empathy and sometimes sympathy, but usually when problems threaten to overwhelm students, our best approach is to provide calm assistance in helping them think through potential solutions. Most often, students will take control and seek remedies. On occasion, however, students face physical or mental problems that simply cannot be resolved without intervention; in such cases, we assist them in finding the expertise they need by, for instance, escorting them to hospitals or campus health centers. Even in extreme cases, though, a spirit of collegiality in the relationship between faculty and student remains the bedrock for assisting students in trouble.

The tragedy at Virginia Tech—exactly three years ago as I write this essay—provided insight into our students and ourselves that guides my perspective. In the end, thirty-two faculty members and students were killed and a number wounded. Three of the dead and one of the wounded were in honors. One of the deceased as well as the wounded student resided in Main Campbell Honors House. The honors staff spent the day seeking information about our students and being available for those who needed to talk or simply be with others. We paid particular attention to Main Campbell, and Terry Papillon—then Preceptor to Main Campbell and now Director of Honors—sat with students late into the night. The students in Hillcrest Honors House prepared food and visited Main Campbell to offer solace. Mostly students needed to know that they were safe and to cry in the company of others who felt their fear and pain.

Members of the honors staff spent hours with students who were having extreme difficulties coping with the complete disruption of campus life. Students dealt not only with the loss of friends but the closing of the university. They were given the option of ending the semester the following week, yet attendance in classes remained significant. I learned a lot about community and about confronting troubles during this time. When given leeway to leave the campus the week of the shootings, many students remained. One young woman who chose to stay explained, "The faculty needs us."

Vigils were held, and students from universities far and near came to be with us. A poster appeared with drawings of all the mascots in the Atlantic Coast Conference huddled around the Hokie Bird. The logo simply said: "We are all Hokies today." Heidi Miller, who was wounded, returned in the fall, and she proved an inspiration to faculty and students alike. The crisis faced by the community became, in fact, thousands of personal events where we could draw strength from one another.

Rather than forget, we are constantly reminded of the events of that horrible day. The following spring semester we lost a student in an automobile accident. She had been in the process of joining Hillcrest Honors House, and Main Campbell students brought food and solace, repaying Hillcrest—too soon—for past kindnesses. We then lost yet another student to illness. What I have learned is that being there to help students when they face trouble begins and continues as the very core of honors for both faculty and students.

We live at a difficult moment in history. The economic, social, and political world is in disarray. State support for education is falling dramatically, and tuition is climbing. Faculty and students alike share a sense of unease as academic departments are rearranged and academic programs altered. Such an environment intensifies the number and difficulty of the troubles with which students must contend.

At honors staff meetings each week, at least part of the time always involves discussion of particular problems faced by students. In recent times, the problems follow a particular and familiar pattern:

- A student's parent lost his or her job and can no longer afford to support the student's education.
- Two roommates in an Honors house cannot resolve the problems of living in the same room.
- A parent has threatened to cut support unless the student achieves a grade average considerably above Honors requirements.
- A suicidal student proves disruptive to several people on the same hallway.
- A student has problems meeting the requirements of a scholarship.
- A student seeks advice on changing academic programs.

In each case one or more of the staff, working as colleagues, explore the various alternatives to solve these and other problems. As important as resolving the problem is the sense of working together. Often the manifestations of stress—the angers, fears, and frustrations—subside when the student has calm help in seeking a reasonable solution.

Given the current climate of the country with divisions making rational discourse impossible, teaching civility and collegiality in troubled times seems an especially important part of the responsibility of university honors. Our students, along with us, need to learn that anger at the cause of a trouble must be replaced by our intellectual prowess in trying to set the world right. If we succeed, then the ideals of justice, fairness, and respect will relegate the raucous and sometimes demeaning debate to inconsequence. To fail is to invite the further decline of civilized discourse and to create an even more troubled and violent world for our future students.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The honors staff at Virginia Tech assisted with this paper. They are: Terry Papillon, Director; Christina McIntyre, Associate Director; Russell Shrader, Assistant Director; Michael Blackwell, Assistant Director; Dan Thorp, Preceptor, Hillcrest House; Patricia Amateis, Preceptor, Main Campbell House; Michelle Wooddell, Office Manager; Tammy Guynn, Secretary Honors, Pre-Med. All were on campus April 16, 2007.

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The author may be contacted at

dudleyc@vt.edu.

Crisis in the Wilderness

Joan Digby
C. W. Post Campus, Long Island University

All experiential education programs involve the potential for students to experience a crisis far from the secure environment of campus and home. Students engaging in these programs are therefore required to carry medical and travel insurance and to complete the waiver of liability forms particular to their college or university. Even as they gather this documentation, honors directors sending students to or leading such programs hold their breath and hope that they will never need to use the emergency contact information.

This has been our collective hope during the past four years that we have offered Partners in the Parks (PITP) experiential learning adventures. As University of Alaska Fairbanks physics professor and honors director Channon Price—coordinator of the latest expedition—gathered the documents, he was keenly aware that the remote Alaskan wilderness of Denali National Park and Preserve would be a difficult environment in which to manage a student crisis.

He packed the forms along with his first-aid kit and checked to make certain that Matt Nickerson and Todd Peterson, PITP program coordinators from Southern Utah University, were carrying a second kit. Then the ten students and three participating faculty members set off on the several-hour van ride to Denali park headquarters.

There we were greeted by the park's Education Coordinator along with the Ranger Kristen, the Education Specialist who would be the group's guide for the first segment of the camping trip. She spelled out some basic regulations for storing food in bear-proof lockers and for practicing safety along the trails that might be shared by wildlife—grizzly, black bear, moose, caribou, fox, and wolf. Her passion for the park, her generosity in bringing extra clothes and unanticipated snacks for the group, her soft voice and buoyant nature gave everyone the confidence to pitch tents in bear country and feel secure at the campsite.

That evening over dinner, Northeastern University student Ryan St. Pierre-Hetz mentioned his sore throat. He had come away with antibiotics and was nearing the end of the regimen but sensed that the infection was not clearing up. Botany student Reagan Lee from the University of Florida gathered rose hips and made some soothing tea. We suggested that Ryan drink as

much liquid as possible and get some rest. The journey had been fatiguing, so we still had reason to hope for the best.

By the second day Ryan was feeling worse. Our thoroughly prepared ranger took his temperature, found that he had a serious fever, and recommended that he go back to headquarters with her, see a physician at the local clinic, and get at least a day of bed rest. In her first discussion with our group at the start of our journey, she had already emphasized the need to be "forthcoming." By definition wilderness has few amenities and only limited access to communication and transport; therefore, it is essential, she reminded students, to express as directly as possible their concerns, fears, and discomforts. In the current situation discomfort had already given way to a serious medical issue.

Putting theory into practice, Ranger Kristen called the group leaders together, laying out a plan for Ryan's situation that involved:

1. having Ryan make his own choice about whether to stay with the group or return to park headquarters and seek medical assistance; and then
2. presenting Ryan's decision to the group in order to alleviate their concerns.

Her direct approach was excellent. She called the group's leaders together with Ryan for a quiet conversation. As a result, Ryan chose to leave and felt comfortable telling the group about his choice. The plan was for him to see a physician, rest in an apartment at headquarters, eat, sleep, and return accompanied by the ranger when he felt well enough to continue. The group expressed their care and concern, allowing Ryan to feel positive about his decision.

This intervention was a model of perfect crisis management. Ranger Kristen's calm, decisive tone, her open involvement of the group leaders, and her clearly stated intention to help Ryan with every aspect of his recovery provided the most positive solution possible. Ryan left the group and went with her (by park bus) to get medical help. At headquarters he was able to contact his father, get financial assistance to cover this emergency and make a plan to keep the family apprised of his condition. Ryan was set up in a park facility. Ranger Kristen brought him food, liquids, and movies to entertain him during the period that he was alone. She looked in on him, sat with him at the clinic, helped him fill prescriptions, and also gave him the space necessary for healing. It turned out that Ryan did not simply have a throat infection. He was also severely dehydrated—a most serious condition—and required IV fluids.

Two days later Kristen and Ryan came back to camp. He was healthy and ready to resume the journey. Everyone called out, "welcome back, Ryan!" In an emotional reunion, the students filled him in on our adventures, and he related his own, emphasizing the deep bond he had forged with the park ranger who had become both his protector and family in a time of extreme need. From her perspective, "Ryan's maturity, his parents' participation, ability to communicate and to front end the finances, the students' support for the decision which allowed Ryan to focus on his health and not feel pulled by allegiances to stay with the group," as well as the collaboration of PITP leaders, were "equal measure ingredients for success" in this case.

During the four years that PITP has taken students on adventures in the national parks, rangers have played critical roles as mentors and guides. At the core of their commitment is a desire to facilitate both the agenda and the safety of groups visiting their parks. In Denali, ranger assistance escalated to a high level of involvement in the well-being of not only Ryan but the whole group. For all of us on the journey, this experience deepened our respect for and debt to the National Park Service. While all the group leaders had ideas about how to manage this student emergency, the resources of the NPS and the thoughtful strategy of an Education Specialist sensitive to student dynamics averted a major crisis and kept the trip whole.

What occurred at Denali involved a basic protocol that might serve well in other student crisis situations:

1. Be certain to carry all documents related to insurance and emergency.
2. Be "forthcoming." Encourage students to express problems to group leaders.
3. Defer to on-site experts with the resources to manage an emergency and contain a crisis.
4. Be optimistic, and be thankful.

This crisis in the wilderness is not so different from those we experience closer to home. How often do students attend classes with high fevers? Nurse a sore throat believing it will simply clear up in time? Push themselves to override debilitating conditions in order to take an exam or finish a paper? Hide their problems so that they won't be sent to an infirmary or hospital or home? As honors directors we need to create a context early in every student's academic career in which to put crisis management on the table. Because we emphasized the importance of being open and forthcoming as a survival strategy at the outset of this wilderness trip, we opened a door that allowed Ryan to discuss his illness and seek help.

In various academic contexts we work to help honors students overcome the shyness and embarrassment that might have prevented Ryan from coming

forward had the necessity to be forthcoming not been emphatically presented as a first principle of survival. Certainly in our honors program orientation activities and first-year experience courses we have the capacity to address survival strategies as applied to personal and medical crises. Encouraging students to be forthcoming and seek expert advice is a first step in helping them act maturely on their own behalf.

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The author may be contacted at

jdigby@liu.edu.

Helping Honors Students in Trouble

Angela M. Salas
Indiana University Southeast

Although I am no expert in effectively helping troubled students, I hope that the Indiana University Southeast Honors Program serves as a place of refuge and support for all its students, most particularly those who are in any sort of trouble. Because my students, whether in the honors program or in my English classes, are reluctant to acknowledge the existence of any difficulties, I have found the Noel-Levitz College Student Inventory (CSI) and Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) helpful in bringing to light impediments to their success and happiness of which I might otherwise be unaware.

Since 2007, when the honors program began, we've administered the CSI to each student registered for an honors class at the beginning of the fall semester, and at the start of the spring semester we administer the CSI or the SSI. Thus, some students take two inventories in a year, and some do not; some students take the SSI, and some do not; but all honors students take the CSI at least once. Once we get the results of either survey, I ask the office assistant to begin scheduling appointments for me to meet with each student, share the report, and discuss ways that the honors program and I can help solve any of the problems the results reveal. We employ a triage system, approaching those students who seem most troubled first. In the fall of 2009, I met with more than forty of our eighty-plus students, and in the spring, I met with nearly as many students.

When the CSI or SSI reports come back to me, I am always surprised at how much I have missed. I see each student regularly, and I teach most of our first-year students during their first semester, so I generally think that I know which students are doing well and which need intervention. I am constantly proven wrong.

Here are some surprising discoveries I have made during follow-ups with students:

1. A young person who seemed almost catlike in her self-possession and grooming had no fixed place to live following her parents' divorce. She was clean and tidy but was living out of her book bag and car.
2. A student who reported working forty hours a week and having a low sense of family support was paying her parents' mortgage and utility

bills and taking a full course load. She wanted to become a physician but was realizing that she might not make it through her science courses if she continued to work full-time. Yet, that mortgage needed to be paid.

3. A student who worked too many hours reported low family support and seemed on the verge of falling asleep in class was actually supporting herself and her teenage brother. Her father, however, continued to claim both children on his taxes, so she was ineligible for financial aid and was paying full tuition.
4. A very aloof student had Asperger's syndrome but did not want anyone to know.
5. A person who never turned anything in on time had Obsessive Compulsive Disorder.
6. A young person whose work had suddenly dropped in quality was taking a nineteen-hour course load, was overwhelmed by it, and was too ashamed to drop any of those hours. He had gone without sleep for three days before coming to my office for his scheduled appointment. I had known him for three years to be a steady and proud young man, but he wept during our meeting.

Because I am not a trained personal counselor and do not have the wisdom of Solomon, I cannot solve all or even many of the problems our students have. On the other hand, I am able to help them problem-solve, prioritize, and re-think their reluctance to get help. I can also put them in contact with personal counseling services, our most resourceful financial aid officers, solid academic advisors, and other resources. While I cannot put families back together, I can help students develop their campus support network and seek the help they need as their parents divorce.

For instance, the young woman who had been supporting her brother is now legally emancipated because our financial aid officers helped her navigate that process. She now has access to financial aid and to help in raising her brother, who has recently finished high school. Students with Asperger's are, with help from Counseling Services and me, becoming integrated into the honors program, and they report having friends. One of them gave a conference presentation about Asperger's at our regional honors conference, and she did a lovely job. Her father, whom I met at our Spring Recognition Event, reports that she is "blossoming." The student with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder provided the university with sufficient documentation about his diagnosis to be protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act. He can now pursue his courses slowly without running afoul of requirements for satisfactory academic progress.

Even though I am known as an attentive teacher, I am always stunned by how successfully students manage to bluff even me while experiencing pain, insecurity, and loss. While I certainly wouldn't argue that every campus should use Noel-Levitz products, it seems clear that it would be profitable to find *some* way of getting beneath the glittering surface that so many students offer up out of the mistaken belief that their human imperfections should be hidden.

If dreams deferred can explode, so, I think, can troubles left unattended. Finding ways to see below the surface, perform emotional triage, and connect students to resources, on and off-campus, seems like the proper thing to do even if these attempts are themselves flawed by the human imperfections of those administering such interventions.

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The author may be contacted at

amsalas@ius.edu.

"Help, I Need Somebody": Rethinking How We Conceptualize Honors

Richard Badenhausen
Westminster College

The very morning I received the *JNCHC* announcement of an issue devoted to honors students in trouble, I met with the mother of a freshman honors student who had threatened that weekend to kill herself. The parent, who had flown over two thousand miles to our campus, was predictably upset and the student demoralized. After individual conversations with each party, during which we decided the best course of action for the student would be to leave honors, I listened to this young lady make the courageous admission that she had never wanted to join the honors program but did so only to please her parents. Other honors students this year have struggled through brutal conflicts with family members, homesickness, substance abuse, computer addiction, and severe motivation problems without resolving the issues successfully.

I found myself wondering about the causes of these painful misfortunes and, in particular, why these students didn't ask for help or only sought assistance when it was essentially too late to dig out of what had become very deep holes. Why is it *so hard* for honors students to ask for help? They have always been told they are the best and the brightest, able to leap tall (academic) buildings in a single bound, but such messages may well be part of the problem.

Jack Dudley is no doubt right in his lead essay that our current economic, social, and political problems have intensified the challenges for all college students. My own sense is that these crises have turned what were merely cracks in the foundations of many family structures into wide, gaping crevasses; job losses, bankruptcies, divorce, and calamitous interactions with our country's healthcare "system" are part of the everyday fabric of our students' lives. Yet the effects of such material circumstances, so visible and tangible and capable of being comfortably fit into narratives of struggle and failure, are exacerbated by the way in which many honors students are encouraged to see and define themselves and by the manner in which they internalize those messages. I see very specific reasons why honors students resist our

support, and we as honors educators can take particular steps to make that "helping project" more palatable and successful for those we teach.

The first challenge honors students face in asking for help is the fact that their self-concept is so grounded in the idea of academic achievement that seeking assistance calls their very identity into question. Asking for help becomes an attack on the notion of a successful self. For such students, soliciting help on an academic matter seems a sign of weakness or even failure; they have seen others seek help throughout their schooling, but they have not associated themselves with that class of students. While many honors students intuitively understand when they need help and recognize that mentors are ready to provide support, the shame associated with the activity overwhelms the intellectual realization that they must act to save themselves. The very word "honors" complicates matters because the origins of the term emphasize respect, fame, glory, esteem, and reputation, which are special privileges bestowed by others. To exhibit vulnerability is to risk losing that externally granted status. A related crisis occurs when such students, accustomed to receiving praise in high school for uncovering and then delivering "what the teacher wants," are told in college to take risks, think for themselves, and cultivate their own voices; the sudden apparent lack of external criteria to determine self-worth is frightening and can leave them at a loss.

A second reason our honors students don't ask for help is that many of them simply don't know how. Most high schools have not created opportunities for high-achieving students to seek assistance. The testing/accountability movement of the past ten years has promoted rote learning environments that discourage high-level student-teacher interaction. In addition, students who have grown up in professional, middle-class households have often not been given the chance to develop and practice coping skills because of overly involved parents ready to solve problems at a moment's notice. Studies have documented the severe damage done to children when they are raised with the knowledge that any difficulty they encounter will be solved with a mere phone call or text to mom and dad. Two of the better recent examinations of the culture of hyper-parenting—Carl Honoré's *Under Pressure: Rescuing Our Children from the Culture of Hyper-Parenting* and Madeline Levine's *The Price of Privilege: How Parental Pressure and Material Advantage Are Creating A Generation of Disconnected and Unhappy Kids*—detail this phenomenon.

Honors students from underrepresented groups face a different dilemma as they enter the unfamiliar world of academia, a place with its own arcane conventions and terminology controlled by people in positions of power who don't resemble them in any way. Such students can resort to what Mary Goldberger calls a "strategic silence." While they may be thoroughly engaged

in the academic project at hand, these individuals have willfully and strategically adopted a "defensive posture of passivity and silence out of fear and threat" (346) given their past experiences in new environments where others unlike them are in dominant positions. For such students, asking for help requires an amount of courage that would be hard for anyone, let alone a teenager, to muster.

Finally, the culture of honors programs can impede the helping project if its ethos celebrates competition and individual academic achievement excessively. Most of us probably seek to cultivate independence among students and equate excellence with an ability to work alone. Yet, as therapist Madeline Levine has pointed out, in such cases where students feel that it is "every man for himself" and "one child's disadvantage becomes another child's advantage," members of that community are going to "feel unsupported and wary of each other" (189). (Imagine how grading curves embody this sensibility.) I often wonder, as my first-year honors students devote their initial weeks of college to reading about individual heroic exploits in *The Odyssey*, whether we are sending mixed messages when we have just spent the previous orientation week discussing the importance of community. Odysseus certainly didn't need to depend on his fellow soldiers during his pursuit of *areté* and *kleos*, except when he required someone to tie him to the mast of his ship.

Many academics struggle to understand why some of our brightest students engage in self-defeating behavior like substance abuse, dangerous sexual practices, and other risky conduct. My thesis is that such activity is often a student's attempt to act out the need for help—to signal it physically—in the face of the challenges mentioned above. Because many honors students have been on display throughout their lives, their identity is often tied up in the act of being looked at and singled out. They have been differentiated from classmates as positive exemplars by their teachers and parents, placed in special accelerated classes, and given awards for their accomplishments. Self-destructive behavior for all to see essentially ensures that someone will arrive to help, though rescue attempts sometimes happen too late. Such behavior might also serve to undercut the suffocating aspects of their high-achieving status by demonstrating that it is undeserved, allowing them to catch their breath before the next challenge arises.

To some audiences, it might seem perverse to talk about honors students having challenges, given their intellectual gifts and the opportunities that typically come their way. Colleagues occasionally mention to me "how wonderful it must be to teach honors students," as if these classes run themselves. But, as we know, honors students have their own special needs and the young lady sitting in my office with her worried mother didn't get to this horrible place on her own.

So what can we do? I think we need to embed, within our classes, curriculum, and external programming, specific opportunities for students to ask for help. We should reward this behavior in grading rubrics and informal praise. We should model how to ask for help, since many honors students don't even know what that activity looks like, and we should diversify the opportunities for students to request assistance since help comes in many different forms. Identifying vulnerability as a courageous and even attractive stance rather than a mark of weakness gives honors students a broader range of options from which to choose. Resituating achievement as a communal activity rather than an individual accomplishment would also improve matters. Certainly the heroic courage demonstrated at Virginia Tech in the aftermath of the 2007 shootings evolved out of a strong sense of community.

In addition, professors need to be more aggressive in creating opportunities for students to seek help. The standard encouragement of "see me in office hours" or "here's the number to the counseling office" will not get it done. Teaching students how to view themselves more holistically and not just as individuals whose entire identity is shaped by the "honors student" designation and reassuring them that their academic struggles don't function as attacks on the self can open up options for students who feel trapped.

Honors students, teachers, and administrators would all benefit from talking about the honors experience a bit differently than we do today, reconfiguring and expanding the categories we use, and suppressing the desire to essentialize the honors experience. Rather than language that emphasizes "being the best," being "different," and finding refuge from the "regular" student body, terminology that emphasizes honors as an alternative mode of learning or curriculum can help remove the enormous pressure that presses down on honors students today. Ultimately, we must guide students out of the bind that positions asking for help as a sign of failure.

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The author may be contacted at

rjb@westminstercollege.edu.

Listening Lessons

Margaret Walsh
Keene State College

As I began writing about helping college honors students, I described my task to a nine-year-old boy. Puzzled, he asked, "How can they be in *trouble* if they are honors students?"

"They may have problems, but people expect them not to," said the honors director. "That's not fair," the boy replied. Precisely! Many honors students at my small public liberal arts campus prefer the work to the title. They opt for intensive academics, welcome challenges, and ask for close interaction; they value classes in which they are going places, doing things, investigating, experimenting, and reflecting; but they experience many of the same personal and academic challenges as their non-honors peers while sometimes not getting the help they need.

Whether they embrace the descriptor or not, many honors students seek out and spend time with students in their cohort, defining themselves as part of an affinity group. While some view their privileges as well earned and necessary for success, others, who may love the depth of study that honors offers, prefer to see themselves as individuals with multiple interests. They see their membership in an honors program not as their primary status but as one among many identities. An equally important reason that students may not wish to emphasize their honors status is that, when trouble arises, they find themselves in the same predicaments as their non-honors peers: navigating difficult friendships, facing an uncertain future, dealing with failure, or suffering the consequences of breaking rules. Such struggles are roughly the same across all categories of students.

While some honors students have access to an abundance of family resources and mentors, many struggle without strong connections or lifelines. The common refrain that honors students are "entitled" is an overgeneralization. Some receive far too much unsolicited advice about what to do, who to become, and how to be happy, and they may resist that sort of pressure, finding it more an encumbrance than an entitlement. Just like their non-honors peers, many honors students do not have the benefit of familial aid and are incurring debt as well as managing adult financial and household responsibilities while they are pursuing their degrees. Honors students are no more likely than their non-honors peers to possess the language to talk openly about these experiences in academic settings.

The reality is that students in honors programs are an *invisibly* diverse group. While they may appear homogeneous with respect to their achievement and ability, they arrive at their programs from noticeably different backgrounds, and they face the same stressors that all college students face. Students today are "troubled" by feelings of anxiety and depression as well as binge drinking, eating problems, acting out, and thoughts of suicide. Of course, when the issue is a serious personal or health problem, an appropriate referral to a trained professional or other resource should be made. Collaboration with other campus offices is essential. When the question is how to navigate the honors labyrinth, however, an honors director can provide support.

Research reveals that honors students approach their learning in a more strategic fashion than non-honors students, applying planning and forethought to their studies (Entwistle cited in Light, Cox, and Calkins, 52). My direct teaching experiences affirm some of this research. Honors students like to read the syllabus ahead of time, and they pay attention both to their assigned work and to the larger universe of their career trajectory. At the same time, some students find it difficult to commit to a major en route to graduation because they genuinely have a lot of interests; they wrestle with the boundaries of their major requirements and with new questions they have formulated about the world in their honors classes, service learning, or travel.

Honors students also express difficulty with the contradictory demands of being fully in the present while also keeping a steady eye on the future. According to Annette Lareau's *Unequal Childhoods*, this future orientation has been cultivated and reinforced from an early age by many suburban middle-class parents. Margaret Nelson, in *Parenting Out of Control*, also finds that financially elite families closely monitor and influence their college age children's lives.

At the end of the last academic year, I invited a dozen of our honors students to reflect on their experiences in the program. Current students offered advice to new students, and we published videos of these "pearls of wisdom" on our blog. From the students' "pearls of wisdom," I learned that students in the honors program feel pressures that could signal academic trouble, even when articulated with an upbeat tone and sense of self-confidence. Perhaps the most important insight of these candid clips was that honors students are like everyone else except that they know not to squander their time, are aware of others counting on them, and are motivated by past success.

Having shared similar backgrounds, the current students in our honors program were able to offer the following advice to their younger peers:

1. Be flexible. Plan ahead.
2. Don't be too concrete with your plans. It's okay to change them.

3. [Honors] is going to challenge you, but it's worth it.
4. There's a club for everyone, but if you don't see it, start it.
5. Get as much out of [college] as you can, because you're given this special opportunity. Not everyone has it.
6. Think about where you are right at this moment, and you have to know where you are going.

While this advice may not keep honors students out of trouble, it will help them have a secure foundation to build on.

Most capable students are fine at strategizing and are also comfortable asking for what they need to realize the goals they have set. A lot rides on students' educational outcomes. Honors faculty should listen to the concerns of less financially privileged students and others who are facing trouble so that we can better understand their sometimes confusing reactions and ambivalence toward the demands of college learning. The honors director should know that some students may not be comfortable seeking honest answers even from those who are there to give them. Thus, the director needs to be sensitive to individual students' needs. This learning process takes time, patience, and willingness to deal with difficulties directly. As one student put it, "I wish someone said 'If it's not okay at first, it will be okay.'" Cultivating honors students requires listening and understanding, not just instructing and directing.

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The author may be contacted at

mwalsh@keene.edu.

Honors Students in Crisis: Four Thoughts from the Field

Eric W. Owens
Duquesne University

Michael Giazzoni
University of Pittsburgh

As we considered the topic and lead essay of the *JNCHC* Forum "Helping Honors Students in Trouble," we were struck by a number of assumptions that seem to be prevalent not only at our universities but among colleagues at other institutions. We have identified four assumptions we would like to address in this essay from perspectives that are informed by the scholarly literature and by our combined experience of twenty years working with honors students as professional counselors, advisors, and faculty members. These four observations lead us to recommendations for others working with honors students.

1. Trouble is trouble. Two problems are inherent in this assumption. First, we take issue with the notion that all crises should be addressed similarly. As Jack Dudley notes in the lead article, "capitulation or growth can be the result of crisis." Every student comes with his or her own history, understanding of how the world works, and background in constructing meaning. When human beings are confronted with crises they cannot understand, they typically retreat to this personal history, understanding, and background as a place of comfort from which to make sense of the nonsensical. Every individual thus has a different perspective on crisis, on trouble, and on how best to react to and recover from it.

Second, an experience that can be emotionally crippling for one person may cause another to find a resource for personal growth and maturation. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), for example, affects far too many of our students at early stages of their personal growth. However, what is not discussed in the popular media, and what is largely ignored in the scholarly literature, is the notion of post-traumatic growth (PTG). Tedeschi and Calhoun describe PTG as the "experience of positive change that occurs as a result of the struggle with highly challenging life crises" (1). PTG can manifest itself in a variety of ways: increased self-esteem, improved personal relationships, enriched appreciation for life in general, and enhanced sense of

self-efficacy or personal strength. Let us not assume that trouble must always mean trouble.

2. Reason is primarily what academia has to offer students who are facing difficult challenges. As academics we tend to work from a perspective that a previous dean liked to call "Life above the neck." We are thinkers and scholars; the cognitive is the familiar and comfortable realm in which we work. In classrooms we ask students, "What do you *think* about all of this?" This question is valid in the intellectual arena as well as the therapy session. How a student cognitively processes a crisis is important. "What do you *think* about [the shooting, your friend's sexual assault, the pressure from your parents, and so forth]?" is a question that needs to be asked.

However, basic counseling theory suggests that *thinking* (cognition) is but one of the three central components of an individual: the cognitive, the behavioral, and the affective (Egan). The behavioral in our students is all too apparent; behaviors are the mental health equivalent of symptoms in medical practice. Behaviors manifest and present themselves to us. The student who enters an office to discuss a research fellowship and suddenly, seemingly without warning, begins to speak about his suicidal ideations is *behaving.*

Behavior, though, is the result of a great deal of thought and feeling, and this brings us to the affective. Humans are *feeling* as well as thinking and behaving beings, and we take issue with the notion that faculty and others who work with honors students should leave their humanity at the door of the academy. Academics find it all too easy to ask "What do you *think* about all of this?" but are often uncomfortable in asking "How do you *feel* about all of this?" Higher education understandably focuses on our students' thoughts, but it should be possible to inquire about feelings while maintaining a hold on reason. Many people are hesitant to ask the affective question; we have certainly found ourselves afraid to ask students how they feel, and fear of the answer may have been the root of this hesitation.

The mere fact that we may be afraid to ask the question, however, is what makes us human in the first place and is what makes it absolutely appropriate to ask the affective question. If a student approaches us with her or his own form of trouble or crisis, we must remember that this person felt safe enough to come to *us*. Obviously we have done most of the heavy lifting already; we have developed rapport and a place of safety and comfort. Let us offer our emotional comfort as well as our intellectual strength.

3. Our students are fully operating adults. Of course our students are adults, but we think it is important to keep in mind that our students are *young* adults. Setting aside for a moment Dudley's term "fully operating," it is safe to assume that our students are not fully *matured* adults; adulthood is a relatively new experience for them. However, students can be forced to see the

world from the perspective of a mature adult when faced with a crisis or difficult situation. Urie Bronfenbrenner suggested that, when people are faced with emotional or physical risk, their normal developmental trajectories may be altered and abnormal development may occur. Students today are often thrust into circumstances for which an eighteen- or nineteen-year-old adult is hardly prepared. Even fifty-year-olds are rarely prepared to cope with, for instance, acts of terrorism or campus violence.

Students, whether in honors or not, are still finding their way and learning what adulthood means to and for them. Research on college student development suggests that students are discovering how to grow as intellectual adults (Perry, 1968 and 1981). They are also in the process of learning how best to manage emotions, interact with others, and develop independence, purpose, and integrity (Chickering and Reisser). Further, they are struggling with developing a sense of morality (Gilligan; Kohlberg). In short, most college students are indeed adults, but let us not assume that our students are "fully operating" adults. They have recently left childhood and are just now learning to navigate the treacherous waters of adulthood. When those waters are made more treacherous by traumatic events, it is only natural to assume that these developing adults may feel the need to regress, at least slightly or for a short time.

4. Honors students are just like other students. For those of us who work in honors, we know this is far from the case; however, we may not understand just how our students are unique. The intellectual differences are obvious, but what about the emotional differences? Research such as that of Rice, Leever, Christopher, and Porter examines issues of perfectionism, stress, and social adjustment as they relate to the variety of mental health needs of gifted college students. External and internal pressures for perfectionism can cause a great deal of stress for our students. Additionally, many gifted individuals experience challenges when relating to peers, developing relationships, and integrating into larger communities.

Research has also shown that the affective needs of honors students are often overlooked because mental health professionals assume that intellectual talent must naturally equate to an increased ability to handle life's emotional difficulties (Greene, 2002 and 2006; Leung). Those of us who work with honors students should remind ourselves not to make this faulty assumption. Honors students *are* different: for better or for worse, they typically see the world differently from their peers, understand crises differently, and create meaning in unique ways, and we must honor these differences and appreciate that our students will likely react to trauma differently from many of their peers. At the same time, though, we cannot assume that they need our help less than their non-honors peers do.

Crises like the tragic events at Virginia Tech force us to examine the ways we approach our work as professionals and as members of our academic communities. Informed by research, we can be more helpful and provide more support than our natural tendencies might allow. Being open to the developmental possibilities inherent in crisis, approaching our students with our full range of humanity, and considering the ways that our students differ from other adults and other students are all means of augmenting our helping skills for the honors population. Through reasoned consideration of these topics, we may better serve our students in the resolution of personal traumas and campus crises.

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The authors may be contacted at
eric.w.owens@gmail.com.

Hitting the Wall

Bonnie D. Irwin
Eastern Illinois University

Much has been written over the last several years about the increase in the number of students who come to our campuses with behavioral disorders and under medication. While honors students are certainly not immune to these conditions, the more frequent emotional trauma we see them suffer is their first encounter with failure. Luckily, we can address this trauma successfully if we are prepared to do so. As honors faculty, we encourage intellectual risk, knowing from our own experience that failure may very well result but confident in the fact that learning also happens despite other outcomes, good or bad. Armed with this knowledge, one of the most important lessons we can teach our students is how to fail.

Our high-achieving students, as they emerge from their pre-baccalaureate education and childhood experience, typically reach us ill-equipped to fail. They have always had cheerleaders, parachutes, ribbons, and rewards to the extent that they consider even good performance inadequate. The first "B" grade can send such students into a tailspin, leading them to question their abilities and their very identities, which are often wrapped up in their definitions of success. Along with teaching our disciplines, then, we need to teach students a few lessons on how and why to fail.

LESSON 1: FAILURE IS *ALWAYS* AN OPTION

Adam Savage, one of the stars of the popular Discovery Channel show *Mythbusters*, has coined several pop culture idioms: "Am I missing an eyebrow?"; "I reject your reality and substitute my own!"; "Failure is always an option." All have resonance for honors students. The pursuit of excellence carries with it both risk and reward, and the discovery of new knowledge may lead to internal and external conflict as students struggle to develop into the productive scholars, socially responsible citizens, and lifelong learners our mission statements promise they will become. Demonstrating to our students that one can fail at even the simplest things but that failing once does not necessarily indicate a pattern will free our students to take on greater challenges. Success is valuable precisely because it is not guaranteed.

LESSON 2: FAILURE IS A GOOD THING

Jon Carroll, in his essay for the *This I Believe* project, tells the story of his five-year-old granddaughter leaving for her first day of school: "I wished her success. I was lying. What I actually wish for her is failure. I believe in the power of failure" (47). If we can explain to our students that repeated success signifies a lack of challenge rather than a level of talent we can both equip them to deal with inevitable failures and encourage a greater level of risk. As Carroll points out, "Success is boring." Accomplishments, especially those that are repeated and that come easily, indicate that one is not really learning much. If our students are not learning, we are failing at the mission of our universities and programs. Repeated success earns diminishing returns.

Conversely, when students learn the true *value* of failure, they might learn to embrace it, welcome it, and appreciate true accomplishments. They also learn that, just as there are degrees of accomplishment, there are degrees of reward; failure teaches students that intrinsic rewards are more important than public recognition. Recognizing intrinsic rewards requires perspective and maturity; failure helps us acquire those values.

LESSON 3: "THE IMPOSSIBLE WILL TAKE A LITTLE WHILE" OR THE 10,000-HOUR RULE

Accomplished musicians, athletes, and scientists all know one thing about success: it takes time. When students first enter our labs and studios, they often become frustrated by the standard of excellence expected at the college level. In high school, our high-achieving honors students were the stars; that performance gained them admittance to our programs but does not guarantee that they will remain on top. The competition is stiffer, and the expectation is heightened. Along with all the skills we teach, we need to teach patience and perseverance. Gladwell's study of successful people in many professions demonstrates that a threshold of practice is necessary for virtuosity. Indeed, practice trumps talent in the pursuit of excellence, as the old joke about Carnegie Hall so aptly reminds us. Knowing that success takes time empowers students to take on more ambitious projects and to work patiently through the obstacles they encounter along the way.

LESSON 4: RECOGNIZE THE WALL BEFORE YOU HIT IT HEAD-ON

Distance runners have numerous metaphors to describe the complete and utter exhaustion that sets in upon reaching the limit of one's training and endurance. My favorite of these metaphors is "hitting the wall." Sharing our own stories of the challenges we have faced and failures we have experienced communicates to students that failure is a shared experience and that even the experts at the front of the classroom have failed and have lived to tell the tale. The signs of impending failure, whether a lab experiment going awry or an "F" on a test, can often be recognized and prepared for in advance, thereby lessening the blow. Once students realize that they *will* fail, they are far more likely to see failure coming and are far more ready to deal with its consequences.

Four simple and obvious lessons in failure can prevent much of the emotional trauma that our students experience in our honors programs and colleges. Some of them do not hit their walls while they are still with us, but preparing them for those hits is among the most valuable training we can provide. Such preparation is also a good reminder for honors faculty and administrators that we, too, have those inevitable bad days in the classroom or office and that failure is an experience that connects us to our students.

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The author may be contacted at

bdirwin@eiu.edu.

The Balkanization of University Support Systems: FERPA's Chilling Effect on Campuses and How Honors Administrators Can Break the Ice

Amy Beth Cyphert and Keith Garbutt
West Virginia University

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 ("FERPA") was signed into law by President Ford on August 21, 1974. It is difficult to state with authority now, some thirty-five years later, exactly why Congress created the law; it was offered as an amendment on the Senate floor, was not the subject of Committee consideration, and therefore is without the traditional legislative history that would help us divine Congressional intent. Surely, though, Congress never intended that FERPA would foster tragedy by creating confusion and preventing critical communication among school officials.

Sadly, however, it appears that confusion over the contours of FERPA, similar state privacy laws, and also the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act ("HIPAA") has in the past hindered university officials, including those in honors colleges and programs, from helping students who are in trouble. In the wake of the tragedy at Virginia Tech, then-President Bush asked several of his cabinet members to "travel to communities across our nation and to meet with educators, mental health experts, law enforcement and state and local officials to discuss the broader issues raised by this tragedy" (Leavitt, Spellings, and Gonzales, 1). One of their key findings was that "confusion and differing interpretations about state and federal privacy laws and regulations impede[d] appropriate information sharing" and that "there was significant misunderstanding about the scope and application of [FERPA and HIPAA] and their interrelation with state laws" (7). The report of the Review Panel presented to Governor Kaine of Virginia included similar

discussions of the confusion caused by these privacy laws and concluded that they "need amendment and clarification" (Massengill, *et al*., 68).

These calls for amendment and clarification were heard and answered. On December 9, 2008, the Department of Education amended its regulations implementing FERPA. The Section-by-Section Analysis issued by the Department makes clear that certain of these changes were made as a direct result of the Virginia Tech tragedy (13). One critical change includes specifically adding "parents" to the list of "appropriate parties" who can be notified in the event of a health or safety emergency. The Department's analysis noted that "this change will clarify to colleges and universities that parents may be notified when there is a health or safety emergency involving their son or daughter, notwithstanding any FERPA provision that might otherwise prevent such a disclosure" (13). This important change should reduce the fear of repercussions regarding FERPA and other privacy laws that prevented communication with parents in the past, even when honors administrators were worried that a student might be experiencing a mental health emergency.

One of the outcomes of the way FERPA has frequently been interpreted was the Balkanization of student support services that exist on a university campus, particularly at large universities. As the cabinet members noted in the Report to the President on the Virginia Tech tragedy, "information silos" at universities "impede appropriate information sharing" and "are heightened by confusion about the laws that govern the sharing of information" (Leavitt, Spellings, and Gonzales, 7). At our institution, by the first day of classes a first-year student will have signed up to five separate FERPA forms, each one pertaining to a particular aspect of the student's life at the institution. While it may make sense from a legal point of view that units addressing different components of student life (such as financial, social, judicial, and academic) limit information to university officers who work in that unit, such a lack of sharing can have devastating consequences. In dealings with a troubled student, interactions between officers and administrators in various areas of a student's life, in addition to interactions with parents, are essential.

For example, a student who is showing reclusive behavior in a residence hall may cause some concern among the administrators of the residence hall, but such behavior does not necessarily suggest a mental health crisis. However, if this behavior is added to information from professors that the student is not attending classes and information from the financial aid office that the student is not using work-study opportunities, together these three items may suggest that a student is suffering from depression. In a vacuum, each piece of information can be easily explained away. From the point of view of residence life, the student may simply be a loner; from the point of view of financial aid, the student may have decided that work-study is damaging her

academic performance and therefore chosen to forego it; and from the point of view of the professor, the student could just be goofing off. Placing all of these pieces of information together, however, will heighten the awareness of a vigilant administrator that this student might need some type of intervention. A belief that FERPA and other privacy laws may prohibit critical information sharing, whether accurate or not, can harm a university's ability to identify students who are in trouble.

Those of us who work in honors colleges or programs must understand the parameters of FERPA, including what information can be shared and when, as we are often uniquely positioned to identify students who are potentially in trouble. First, at institutions such as ours with residential honors colleges, certain administrators may live on-site with the students, be familiar with their lives and routines, and be quickly able to notice any disruptions or changes. Second, even where administrators do not live with the students, honors colleges and programs often function as smaller colleges within a large university setting, creating closer relationships between administrators and students and allowing a better chance for an administrator to notice warning signs.

For the same reasons that an honors college administrator may be in a better position than many other university officials to have important information about a student who is in trouble, those of us who work at honors colleges may also have important insights about whether a situation has risen to the level of an "emergency" for FERPA purposes. The 2008 amendments attempted to clarify the leeway an honors college or other academic institution would be afforded in determining if a health or safety emergency is occurring. The regulations direct that the educational institution is to consider "the totality of the circumstances" in making this determination and that, if it "determines that there is an articulable and significant threat," the institution may disclose information "to any person whose knowledge of the information is necessary to protect the health and safety of the student or other individuals" (34 CFR Part 99.36(c)). For the reasons discussed previously, we as honors administrators may have the best vantage point for assessing the "totality of the circumstances" bearing upon our students. "If, considering the information available at the time of the determination, there is a rational basis for the determination, the Department will not substitute its judgment for that of the educational agency or institution in evaluating the circumstances and making the determination" (Simon). As the Department noted, "the Secretary determined that greater flexibility and deference should be afforded to administrators so that they can bring appropriate resources to bear on circumstances that threaten the health or safety of individuals" (Section-by-Section Analysis, 13).

The acknowledgement by the Department of Education that institutions may have been overly cautious in their interpretations of FERPA and should be given greater deference and flexibility is encouraging. The opinions and judgments of honors administrators should be given due weight given our exceptional closeness to our students. The new standards of "articulable and significant threats" and "rational basis," however, are so vague as to give no real guidance, especially to non-attorneys. As one commentator put it, "the revised regulation merely introduces new ambiguous language for universities to decipher" (Chapman, 361). The new standard also does not seem to address the problem of Balkanization. Ultimately, what is and is not an emergency for purposes of FERPA is likely to be decided by legal representatives on campus, not by those people who have the day-to-day working knowledge of the students and their problems. Honors administrators may be in the best position to know what constitutes an emergency regarding the students they work with so closely. Accordingly, honors administrators need to be part of the dialogue on their campuses about policies that implement FERPA and to feel confident about their knowledge of those policies.

While a step in the right direction, the 2008 amendments have clearly not alleviated all confusion over how FERPA applies when administrators are attempting to help an honors student who is in trouble. Further, the amendments are only going to make a difference if administrators at honors colleges know about them and have meaningful discussions with their general counsel offices about what the amendments mean and how they affect existing university policy.

One of the unique aspects of the position of honors dean or director is that we frequently have our feet in at least two institutional camps, academics and student life. We may thus be uniquely positioned to help break down the Balkanization of student support services by being able to communicate across the barriers set up artificially within the institution. If we are to serve our students well, we should at the very least take an active part in campus discussions on the interpretation of FERPA, HIPAA, and other state or federal privacy laws. We need to help with the development of policies that, while still protecting the privacy rights of the individual, allow increased communication between the academic, student life, and administrative units of our campuses.

Given that many honors directors and deans (and their staffs) do, by virtue of their position, have a broader view of the student than many others on campus, we are in a better position than most to overcome any barriers to appropriate information sharing posed by FERPA. As we consider the plight of the troubled student, we should ask ourselves, in light of the structure of our own particular program or college, to what extent we can bring together

the many facets of a student's life in order to better understand and help if the student is at risk. Colleges such as ours that have an established residential component should ask whether we have, perhaps even inadvertently, committed the sin of Balkanization simply through habit, perhaps as a result of both appropriate professional caution and the perceived dictates of FERPA and or HIPAA. For example, where there is one staff member whose primary responsibility is identifying and working with students in academic trouble and another staff member in the residence hall who is likely to be aware of students showing signs of social isolation or depression, a system should be in place for these staff members to communicate in an appropriate way that respects the requirements of FERPA and other privacy laws. If these individuals are not in regular and formal communication with each other, then we may already be failing our students.

We can only reach out to troubled students if we have strategies in place to identify them. As a threshold matter, we should be aware of and use the resources that are already provided by our institution. While these resources vary by institution, mid-semester grade reports, for instance, tend to be common. At WVU, early in each semester the central administration produces an analysis, based purely on demographic data and previous performance, that can identify students who might be at academic risk. The number of honors students who appear is always somewhat surprising: these are typically students who, while having performed well in previous educational experiences, show social, financial, and academic characteristics that suggest a likelihood of academic problems during the next semester. The student life side of the university also generates a report on students who, because of behavioral issues, may also be considered at risk. While both these sources of information are, to a certain extent, "soft," the intersection of the two indicates a student for whom care and intervention might be necessary.

Within honors colleges, especially those with residential components, some types of data are easy to collect and collate, possibly leading to appropriate early interventions. Care should be given to respecting the contours of FERPA and other privacy laws, and it is a good idea to work with the general counsel in developing such plans, but some ideas our honors college has used include:

- Early grade reports: Given the small size of most honors classes, it is reasonable to ask honors professors to provide the honors office with grade reports on the first assessment taken in a class.
- An attendance report: Poor attendance is one of the first "flags" for the at-risk student, and an attendance report is not an onerous request of the professor.

- Residence hall RA reports: RAs are required to monitor their residents at WVU and report any who seem to be showing "at-risk" behaviors, particularly those associated with suicide risk. There is a significant literature on this topic, and RAs should be trained to recognize the more obvious warning signs.
- Financial reports: While FERPA restricts access to certain detailed information, WVU asks academic units to alert students who are in danger of being removed from classes for non-payment of tuition.

These or other tools should make it possible by mid-semester to collate the information that identifies students who are potentially at risk. The path one follows at this point depends on the individual program or college. At West Virginia University, when we receive reports of poor performance regarding our honors students, we ask that they have interviews with either the dean or an assistant. During those face-to-face interviews, we have the greatest probability of identifying the truly troubled student. Most students simply need reference to our learning centers, in-hall tutors, or other support systems that can help a student who is struggling with either life problems or academic problems and needs help to turn poor grades around.

Although monitoring of student grades, attendance, financial difficulties, and behaviors may add to the burden of a small, stressed honors administration, it might be one of the best services we can offer our students, and we seem frequently to be in the best position to do it. Early identification of any sort of problem is likely to lead to a successful outcome. If honors administrators do not institute programs that assess our students for potential problems, we are failing in one of our most important roles, that of caring for each student as an individual. Tragic events such as the one at Virginia Tech as well as student suicides that occur on many of our campuses—approximately 1,100 college students die by suicide each year (Wilcox *et. al*.)—make it imperative that we as honors deans and directors be continually vigilant.

With the best will in the world no campus can be completely prepared for events such as those that tragically struck Virginia Tech. We can, however, learn from that experience and work together with others on our campuses, including our general counsel offices, to ensure that no law hampers our ability to improve our support to students before they reach a crisis point.

Note: Ms. Cyphert is a licensed attorney.

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The authors may be contacted at

kgarbutt@wvu.edu.

Research Essays

What is Expected of Twenty-First-Century Honors Students: An Analysis of an Integrative Learning Experience

Celia López-Chávez and Ursula L. Shepherd
University of New Mexico

INTRODUCTION

Integrative learning has been identified as a primary goal for university graduates in the twenty-first century. The word "integrative" has been part of higher education scholarship for at least the past ten years and increasingly since the 2007 Report by the National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America's Promise, a document that includes integrative learning as one of the main objectives of higher education for the new century. Honors programs and colleges offer excellent opportunities to accomplish this objective along with an interdisciplinary and international perspective. In this article, we present current scholarship on integrative learning in the context of an innovative, international program that explicitly sought to address this outcome and that had both experiential and international components. We also discuss the qualitative assessment measures used in the program, which generally indicated that students learned to connect skills and knowledge, were able to make connections and reflect on them, and demonstrated ability to address real-world problems.

In the spring of 2007, the University of New Mexico Honors Program offered a new and highly experimental program to its students. The "From the Rockies to the Andes" program comprised two linked courses (Biogeography and Social Science) that compared arid zones on two continents. This program explicitly aimed to address the four essential learning outcomes identified in 2002 by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) that students must achieve to be prepared for the twenty-first century: knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world; intellectual and practical skills; personal and social responsibility; and integrative

learning. The first and second objectives are the most universally accepted as the responsibility of American universities and are most easily aligned with the curricula of academic disciplines and professional programs. Some educators and community leaders may feel more contentious about the third objective, believing it not to be within the province of education. We disagree strongly and believe that all good teaching must at a minimum model all of the first three objectives; however, they are not the focus of this article.

Here we focus on the fourth objective, which requires some explanation and is the most difficult to achieve. Our experience in "From the Rockies to the Andes" has led us to reexamine its meaning and implementation several times. Carol Schneider defined integrative learning as "a shorthand term for teaching a set of capacities (arts of connection, reflective judgment, and considered action) that enable students to put their knowledge to effective use" (1). We would add to this definition the 2007 National Leadership Council's description of integrative learning as "achieving synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies," which is "demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems" (3).

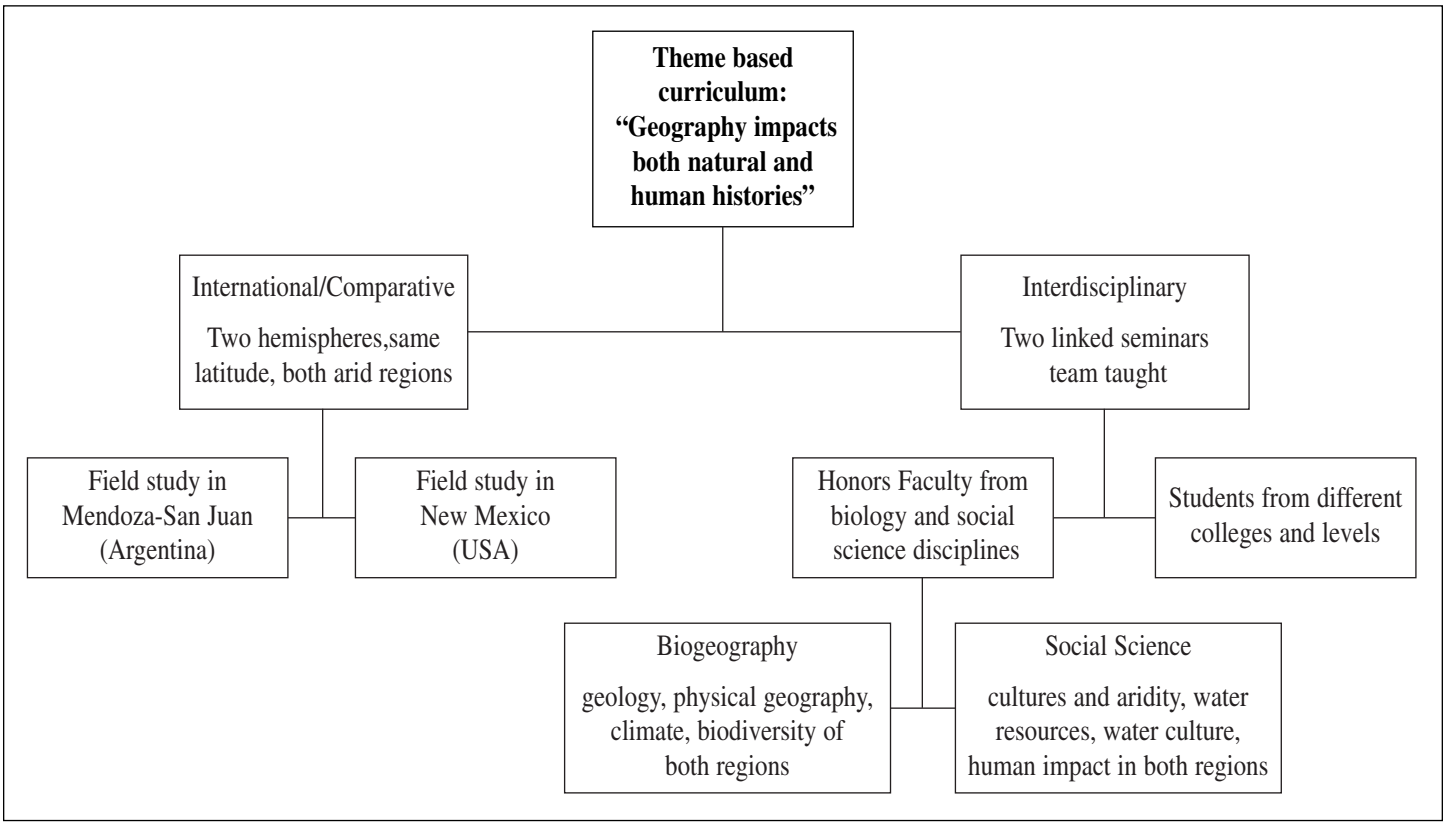
The program we offered in 2007 and 2009 provides a special opportunity to examine efforts to achieve this fourth objective in a setting that went beyond a single course but did not encompass an entire curriculum. UNM is a large, public, metropolitan research university with more than 27,000 students. The honors program has existed within this university for nearly fifty years. It is an interdisciplinary program that allows students to engage in courses and experiences beyond their disciplines and that is deeply committed to experiential learning and international experiences. The program also has an unusual grading system (A, Credit, No Credit) that encourages students to take classes outside their comfort zone.

THE PROGRAM

"From the Rockies to the Andes: A Comparative Study of Arid Zones in Two Hemispheres" linked two courses with a common overall theme (i.e., geography influences both natural and human histories.) This program had several unique characteristics that allowed us to work toward higher-order connections and syntheses. These characteristics are described in Figure 1.

Because this program involved two linked courses it worked as an intensive interdisciplinary experience for our students, and it fitted well into UNM's overall honors curriculum. Education experts have noted a strong relationship between integrative learning and interdisciplinary studies. Welch finds that synthesis and integration can not be achieved in the absence of an interdisciplinary approach (171) while Schneider asserts that "advanced

Figure 1: Characteristics of From the Rockies to the Andes Program



interdisciplinary general education" (1–2) is crucial to promoting integrative studies. Welch further counsels that several elements must be included in order for interdisciplinary experience to be productive: a theme based curriculum, team teaching that provides real expertise in each field, and instruction in the methods and tools of each type of investigation (182–89). "From the Rockies to the Andes" incorporated all of these elements as outlined in Figure 2.

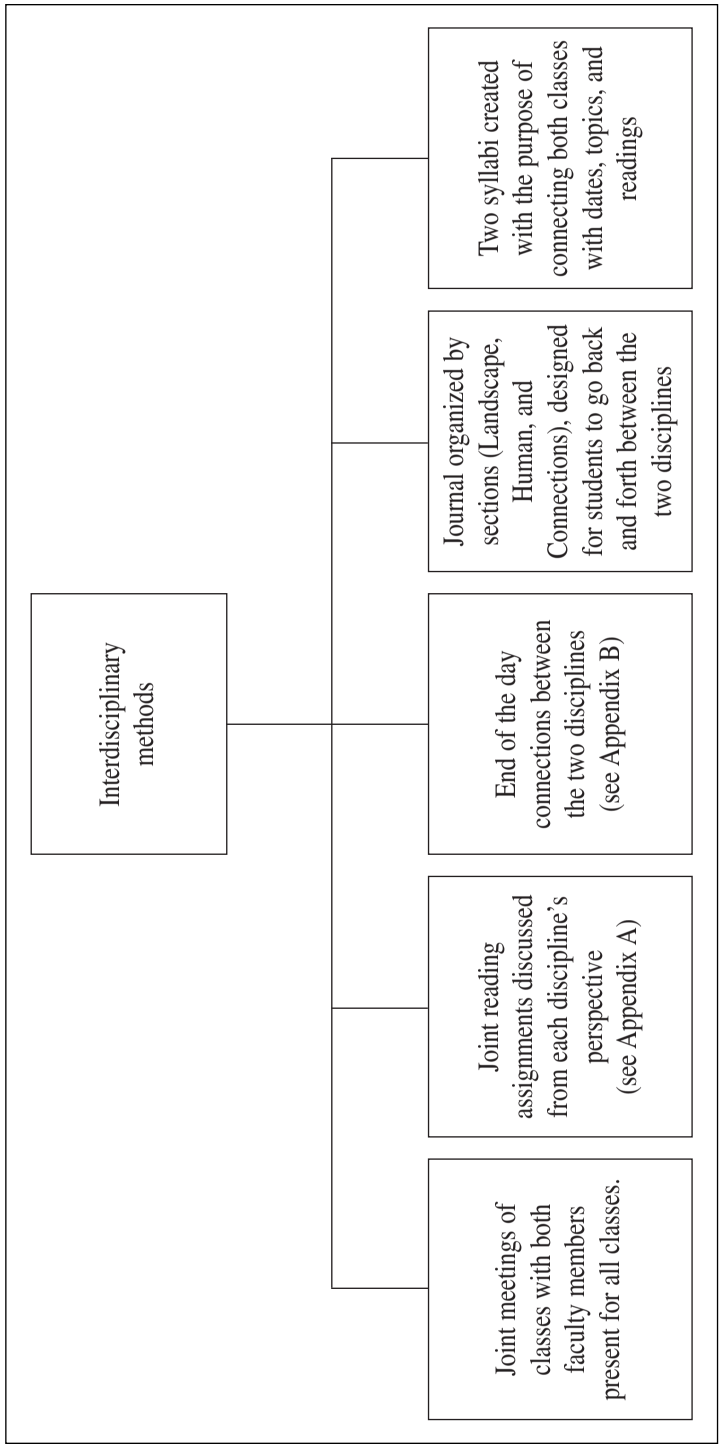
The program emphasized another critical component identified in the 2007 NLC Report: development of a global perspective. NLC cites the advantage to students of participating in international experiences that stress learning about diverse cultures and worldviews. In addition, Richard M. Freeland emphasizes the importance of various forms of experiential opportunities in liberal education. We achieved these objectives through the comparison of two arid regions, with fieldwork at several sites in New Mexico during the semester and in western Argentina during spring break. In this way, we provided both international and experiential components.

In summary, our program included the most important components identified by educational experts as necessary to achieve integrative learning, making "From the Rockies to the Andes" an excellent model for examining the success or failure of curricular efforts to achieve this goal. Did our students achieve integrative learning and why or why not? We used the Huber and Hutchings report to develop standards for evaluating student success; this information was used to construct Table 1. We also assessed outcomes of assignments and unsolicited comments from students following completion of the classes and during exit interviews as students graduated. Finally, we evaluated our own efforts at achieving "intentional teaching," another crucial element if students are to achieve integrative learning.

PEDAGOGICAL TOOLS AND ANALYSIS OF OUTCOMES

Measure 1 was "Did students develop the ability to connect skills and knowledge from multiple sources and experiences, applying theory to practice in various settings?" We are able to answer with a resounding "Yes" (Table 1). Through the use of worksheets at each field site and for each course, students were trained to gather information from a variety of sources. Students demonstrated the ability to make direct connections between theory and practice or between knowledge and experience by answering questions based on direct observations, analyzing readings, and, in some cases, participating in hands-on activities such as museum visits, outdoor explorations, and lab work).

Figure 2: Welch's Elements Applied in From the Rockies to the Andes Program



A highly successful tool for making connections was the required journal. While Huber and Hutchings propose a portfolio, a journal served in similar ways, acting as "a vehicle for students to document, connect, and reflect upon their learning across courses" (8). Through the journal, students dealt with the content of both courses and connected them. We asked students to create sections titled "Landscape" (for the biogeography course), "Human" (for the social science course), and "Connections" (to integrate both). For each field study and often in the classroom, students worked in the journal on answering questions, making observations, or developing topics that each faculty provided for each course. Students went back and forth, titling each page with the specific course for which they were writing. The goal was for students to become comfortable with moving easily between the two disciplines. We also encouraged students to make drawings and paste examples of species (e.g., plant specimens), pictures, even souvenirs from the different sites into their journal, creating a scrapbook of the semester. We invited an artist to spend several hours with the class to demonstrate how the students might incorporate art and design. Documenting and recording were ongoing, regular parts of the program, and students became more and more comfortable with the habit of making connections. Although they were often successful, they struggled to make in-depth connections, not merely obvious or superficial ones.

The element of "intentional teaching" came into play because we had difficulties in making students aware of the types of connections we wanted, and we did not spend enough time in assessing this issue systematically. By the end of the semester, however, and based on the feedback we gave them when we reviewed their journals, some students had significantly improved this component of their learning. From unsolicited comments in exit interviews of graduating seniors, we know that several students believed that they saw the world differently after struggling to make connections throughout a whole semester.

Measure 2 was "Did students participate as intentional learners in this program?" Both Huber and Hutchings and the 2007 NLC Report identified intentional learning as a key element in achieving the highest levels of integrative learning. Huber and Hutchings stated that intentional learners "approach learning with high levels of self-awareness, understanding their own processes and goals as learners and making choices that promote connections and depth of understanding. . . . They are, if you will, on the road to lifelong learning" (6). In a nutshell, intentional learning entails "cognitive processes that have learning as a goal rather than an incidental outcome" (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 363). Several theorists have identified the art of reflection as an important skill linked to becoming intentional learners (e.g., Dewey; Schon; Kolb; Colby et al.).

Table 1. Effectiveness of Various Tools We Created for From the Rockies to the Andes to Achieve the Elements of Integrative Learning

Elements	Teaching/Learning Tools	Results
1. Documenting and connecting skills and knowledge	– Worksheets: Questions based on observations, reading analysis, hands on activities	**Yes**
	– Journal: Documenting in landscape/human sections, and discussing and writing about relations between topics and disciplines.	**Yes**
2. Intentional learning	– Journal: Reflecting	**Inconsistent**
	Final essays and end of semester class discussions	**Yes**
3. Addresing real world problems	– In-class essay – Class discussions – Questions for journal (topics: climate change, aridity, water resources, biodiversity issues, socio-economics)	**Yes, varying success**
4. Intentional teaching	– In-class dialogue between faculty – Mentoring for research	**Yes**
Modeling	– Specifying kinds of connections	**Inconsistent**
Assessing	– Systematic reflection on challenges	**Inconsistent**

At the outset we intended the journal to be a vehicle for students to reflect. However, we did not explicitly design a portion of the journal for this activity. As a result, ongoing reflection occurred less often than we had hoped. In future classes, we will increase explicit efforts to engage students in active reflection about their learning during the semester.

Reflection did, however, take place at the end of the semester when we had several class discussions and an in-class essay in which students were asked to write about such topics as climate change and international relations (Appendix C). Also, students from the 2007 program spontaneously reported during graduation exit interviews that in this program they had developed an awareness of the importance of reflection and of the connection between thought and action. Several reported that this program was pivotal to their

eventual understanding of specific personal issues about their lives and professional goals. One student, a math and education major, noted that "as a result, I learned how to truly synthesize different subjects together—taking two entirely separate entities of knowledge and combining them to analyze their effects on one another and search for commonalities." Another student, a political science major, commented that the "'From the Rockies to the Andes' was simply the most innovative course at UNM and was important because of the tie-in it forced between hard and soft sciences."

For Measure 3 we asked, "Did students have opportunities to, and succeed in, addressing real word problems?" The answer was "yes" to some degree. A comparative study of arid regions with field experience in two hemispheres guaranteed a global perspective, and the focus on aridity and water made it possible to connect class topics to other parts of the planet. We often discussed real world issues in class discussions, and sometimes students wrote about them in the "connections section" of their journals.

In the final in-class essays, students discussed current issues such as climate change in the context of knowledge gained in class (Appendix C). Some did a better job than others, but students struggled with this exercise. We believe we should have required this type of thought more often throughout the semester either in take-home essays involving research or writing exercises based on the program's readings. On the other hand, we strongly believe that one of the benefits of using study abroad for integrative learning is that "addressing real world problems" occurs naturally. The international aspect of our program definitely helped students see their own region from a different a perspective.

Our experience in teaching this program taught us that intentional teaching is essential if students are to achieve integrative learning. Following Huber and Hutchings' definition, "intentional teaching" occurs when faculty model "the thoughtful approach to learning that they want their students to develop"; this requires "systematic reflection on and inquiry into the specific challenges and dilemmas faculty face in the classroom," requiring that they bring the habits, skills, and values of scholarship to their work as teachers (9).

We practiced intentional teaching as we modeled professional discourse through in-class dialogue between the two of us; through mentoring for research skills; and through long-time experience in an interdisciplinary environment. We noticed that students very much valued the opportunity to witness dialogues between scholars that enriched the interdisciplinary experience. The more difficult components of intentional teaching included training students to identify the types and depths of connections to make.

Intentional teaching also includes assessment. Our efforts were hampered by the limited time we spent during the semester in reflection about assessing

student learning, which resulted in part from the heavy logistical requirements of such a program. However, both beforehand, as we designed the program, and afterwards, as we reflected on it, we spent a great deal of time on qualitative assessment.

We did not succeed completely in intentional teaching because integrative education, which implies a continuous learning process for both students and faculty, has so many other challenges in any semester. In our program, for instance, many factors related to students' backgrounds and educational levels played roles in how they were able to make connections; because we accepted second-semester freshmen through senior-level students, members of the class differed greatly in sophistication, interdisciplinary experience, and maturity levels.

We believe that, although we did not fully accomplish every goal, we came a long way toward developing the skills of intentional teaching. We recognize that education is a two-way-experience: for successful integrative education, "intentional learning" and "intentional teaching" must occur simultaneously.

CONCLUSION

Overall, we believe that students succeeded in achieving integrative learning, which is a continuous process with many factors in play. Our program achieved many of the goals of integrative education, but we argue that it remains difficult to get to the "perfect integrative experience" in practice. Greater success may be achieved by focusing on a few key areas: first, incorporate explicit "reflections on learning" exercises; second, be clear about the types of connections students should make; third, allow better feedback by not making too many assignments; and fourth, maintain a strong awareness of being intentional teachers. With these four components in place, our efforts should continue to bring even greater success. At the same time, we are proud of what our students have achieved, and one important lesson that senior exit interviews taught us about assessing the impacts of our teaching is that often both we and our students recognize the fruits of our learning only long after a class is finished.

Over the next decade and beyond, our students and our nation face great challenges both economically and culturally as we participate in a new global community. The AAC&U has described the change that is in process as a movement from the American Century to what they describe as the Global Century. The learning outcomes outlined by the AAC&U will be imperative to the success of our citizens as they deal with this shift. We in the honors community have a long history of working both intuitively and explicitly toward all of these goals, and we are in many ways better positioned than

other parts of the academy to provide this education to our students. Courses, programs, and whole curricula that aim to address these goals will play a key role in the future success of our students.

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The authors may be contacted at
celialop@unm.edu.

APPENDIX A

Joint Reading Assignments

Reading for both seminars: selection from *Voyage of the Beagle* by Charles Darwin

The subsequent assignment required students to look at the reading from more than one perspective.

Prior to class meeting:

- Biogeography: Each student was required to provide a species description and life history traits for an animal or plant species mentioned in Darwin's work.
- Social Science: Each student had to write a short essay about Darwin's perceptions of nineteenth-century Argentinean society, culture, and politics.

APPENDIX B

End of the Day Connections

Reading for both seminars: *Seeing Things Whole. The Essential John Wesley Powell*, edited by William de Buys.

Prior to class meeting: students were required to read with special attention to certain topics for the Biogeography seminar and other topics for the Social Science seminar.

In-class "Connections" assignment: Students worked in small groups connecting Powell's ideas with specific current-day conservation issues and write their conclusions in their journal.

APPENDIX C

Final In-class Essays

This assignment required students to address real world issues using knowledge and skills learned throughout the semester and going beyond those topics that had been discussed.

- Social Science seminar:
  On April 29, 2009 President Obama concluded a summit of the hemisphere's leaders (Summit of the Americas) with a speech in which he offered a new agenda for Latin America that is broader than under the Bush and Clinton administrations, which were more focused on trade and counter-narcotics programs. You have been thinking about similarities and differences of two regions and two countries, one in the Northern and one in the Southern Hemisphere. You have learned some concepts and tools to be able to observe, to compare, and to come up to some conclusions regarding geographical and human aspects of both regions and countries. The current global crisis and the "new agenda" towards Latin America by Obama's administration indicate that we are living important times. What new skills and understanding did you gain through these classes that you can use in your professional life and/or as a world citizen committed to create a more equal world? What knowledge did you gain that can help you to understand and/or propose solutions to make the U.S.-Latin America (and Argentina) relations come to the point of "equal partners" (using President Obama's words)?

- Biogeography seminar:
  In February 2007 the IPCC released its report on the subject of climate change and global warming. This is not a topic we covered in either course, however, you have now been thinking about arid lands in both the Northern and Southern hemispheres. Will there be special problems for the earth's arid regions or will they escape the worst of the problems due to their geography and cultures? After considering this global issue, think more locally. How might Mendoza and Albuquerque in particular experience the impacts of rising temperatures, water issues, etc. looming in the face of predicted climate change? Finally, as an informed citizen who will be required to participate in the dialogue, what issues, concepts, and concerns do we need to consider to understand and alleviate this problem.

Honors Programs in Four-Year Institutions in the Northeast: A Preliminary Survey toward a National Inventory of Honors

Richard England
Salisbury University

COUNTING INVISIBLE PROGRAMS

Honors education, as we know, is a curious phenomenon, particularly from the perspective of those interested in institutional research. It is not a discipline *per se*, and so it is not given a "Classification of Instructional Programs" (CIP) code by the National Center for Education Statistics. Accordingly, the federal Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data System (IPEDS) does not include any information on honors. Honors is part of the Common Data Set (part E.1 "Common Data Set," 2009) overseen by the College Board and an assembly of national post-secondary-education organizations. That instrument lets colleges state whether they have an honors program along with other options such as study abroad and internships. However, the Common Data Set is not gathered into a publicly available database, and so it is not much use for institutional comparisons.

The available lists of honors programs are, therefore, limited. Researchers can turn to the list of National Collegiate Honors Council or institutional members of regional NCHC-affiliated organizations. Alternatively, they can use the list of honors programs and colleges in the most recent edition of *Peterson's Guide to Honors Programs and Colleges* (2005), which lists almost six hundred programs, giving details about them and their place within their institution. Not surprisingly, *Peterson's Guide* has been a primary basis for studies of honors programs in America (see, for instance, Long). All of these sources, though, are limited by the fact that participation in honors organizations (and *Peterson's Guide*) is voluntary. While many excellent universities are active in NCHC, many are not. In the absence of any other source of information, we cannot know for sure what proportion of honors programs have an affiliation with a national or regional honors organization.

As a faculty member originally from Canada, where honors programs are generally limited to departments, I have long been interested in discovering which institutions near mine have college-wide honors programs. Sometimes my curiosity is spurred by some internal institutional request for a comparative report, when, like many honors directors, I need to mine information about institutional peers and their honors programs from websites and direct surveys. In the absence of a more systematic survey of honors, I know I am neglecting uncounted and thus invisible programs. Given this lack of information about honors from comparative institutional studies, individual honors programs may well suffer in times of economic privation. This study is an attempt to count that which has been previously invisible and, perhaps, to begin a national inventory of honors programs.

WHY BOTHER?

Recently, attending a faculty development day on instructional productivity, I asked the presenter how honors might be counted. Since honors lacks a CIP code and its faculty members are housed in other departments, I was told it would not be counted. Honors instruction would be attributed to the department of the professor teaching the class. So, for the National Study of Instructional Costs and Productivity, a major comparative initiative sponsored by the University of Delaware, honors education is invisible ("National Study"). Similarly, honors is typically given short shrift by major regional accrediting bodies. Going unnoticed can be a pleasure, particularly when being noticed means being asked for data and reports, but, whatever immediate advantages invisibility offers, the long term-disadvantages are obvious. Studies that generate data about particular funding needs determine where the money will go, and so honors is likely to lose out financially if it remains invisible.

Having ample information about honors programs can better contextualize requests for funding or support. Having a wide comparative survey of other programs lends weight and statistical significance to a claim about underfunding or to an argument for retaining a program that otherwise might be imperiled. In 2002, for instance, Long claimed that 41% of public four-year programs have honors programs, basing her studies on information from the 1997 *Peterson's Guide*. As a point of historical comparison, a South Carolina survey in 1967 suggested that the percentage was 63% (Neidich). Surely honors programs at public institutions have not declined in number since 1967; instead, methodological differences explain the discrepancy between the 2002 and the 1967 studies. Given the lack of information, we do not know how many public four-year institutions typically offer an honors program, but such knowledge can be crucial to an honors administrator's perspective on how honors works at his or her own school.

Beyond the self-serving uses of honors information, we can see that it might also help us learn how many honors programs are affiliated with honors organizations such as NCHC as well as giving us a benchmark to consider how honors waxes or wanes with the years. The purpose of this study is to take an initial step toward some of these particular ends by proposing a method to generate a database of honors programs that might extend beyond the limits of this study. This database could then be used as the basis for more extensive and authoritative surveys of the state of honors education in the United States.

METHOD AND DEFINITIONS

Answers to the question of what defines honors education have consumed considerable ink, culminating in sets of "Basic Characteristics" for honors programs and for colleges. However, these defining documents are intentionally broad; not all programs have all the basic characteristics, and some may exist that have very few of them. Practical definitions have been devised to help students navigate their way into honors education (Digby, 9–10) and to distinguish between honors programs and honors colleges (Sederberg; Achtenberg). Such definitions usually take the form of exploratory essays and are difficult to boil down into a list of essential characteristics.

The authors of the Common Data Set used by institutional research officers are less bothered by the nuances of definition. They describe an honors program as "Any special program for very able students offering the opportunity for educational enrichment, independent study, acceleration, or some combination of these" ("Common Data Set, 2009–2010"). The simplicity of the definition sacrifices precision, but it does seem to be clear. On closer inspection, however, one can see how different institutional research officers, assembling a large mass of data, might define honors differently. Does a university, for instance, that allows students with a high GPA to take a larger number of summer courses in the interest of accelerated learning count as an honors program? Does a university that offers some departmental honors options have an honors program? Most people with practical knowledge of honors would not think so, but, given the breadth of the definition, an IR officer might. The vagueness of any brief definition impedes progress toward a list of essential ingredients for honors.

Instead of dragging in Wittgenstein and the history of taxonomy, I have chosen simply to move away from the essentialist and toward the nominalist pole of defining honors. In order to have an operational definition, I have defined an honors program as any program so-named online and providing information to off-campus website visitors. The only qualification to this definition is that an "honors" program or college must at least have a unifying

early experience for students with different majors. While many honors programs offer in addition several departmental options, for the purposes of this survey the presence of individual departmental honors offerings on their own does not qualify an institution as having an honors program. I searched for a school's single central honors website rather than various departmental honors pages.

To find honors programs, then, I visited and searched institutional websites drawn from Carnegie Classification listings. I chose to focus on four-year institutions located in New England and the Middle Atlantic states (Connecticut, District of Columbia, Delaware, Maryland, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont). I chose this region because it is the one I am most familiar with, having been active in the Northeast Regional Honors Council, and because it seemed likely to offer a wide range of four-year schools. I selected all classes of doctoral and research universities, all master's universities, and all baccalaureate institutions with the following exceptions: I did not include special-focus colleges (such as seminaries and medical colleges) since most of these do not serve a mainly undergraduate population; and I removed from the list one or two colleges that either had closed since the information was collected by the Carnegie Foundation in 2005 or that offered only graduate instruction. In the end I came up with a survey population of 421 four-year institutions. I did not add community colleges (or other colleges that primarily award associate's degrees) to this study because I had already come up with a substantial number of institutions to examine. However, I hope, perhaps with the collaboration of community college honors directors, to examine honors at two-year institutions in the future.

This survey involved a lot of web-browsing, which was undertaken from February 2009 to February 2010. Generally each search would begin by browsing links and sublinks from Academic and Prospective Student pages, where honors program web pages usually reside. Sometimes I had to do in-site searches to find information about honors programs tucked away in online catalog pdf files. The search terms and limited phrases I used included "honors," "honors program," "scholars program," and "fellows program." If these methods did not provide evidence of an honors program, I assumed that the institution did not have one. This method is not immune to error, but I believe it provides an acceptably accurate way of finding out where honors programs exist; it is also clear and simple enough that different researchers can join the effort and complete a national survey rather easily.

RESULTS

What follows is a digest of my survey of what four-year institutions in the Northeast states have honors programs and colleges. In each of the following tables the number of institutions in a particular category is given, followed (in parentheses) by the percentage value of that number as a whole of the category in a given row. Rows indicate various institutional categories (such as basic classification, size, selectivity etc.). Columns indicate whether or not institutions have an honors program (Tables 1–6), NCHC membership (Table 7), and honors college status (Table 8). After each table below, I provide a brief discussion of that set of results.

Table 1: Honors in the NE

	With Hons	No Hons	Total
All four-year schools in NE	288 (68.4%)	133 (31.6%)	421

Most four-year post-secondary institutions in the Northeast have an honors program, but there are regional variations, as we see below.

Table 2: Honors by State

	With Hons	No Hons	Total
Connecticut	15 (75%)	5 (25%)	20
Washington, DC	6 (54.6%)	5 (45.4%)	11
Delaware	3 (60%)	2 (40%)	5
Massachusetts	39 (68.4%)	18 (31.6%)	57
Maryland	17 (68%)	8 (32%)	25
Maine	6 (37.5%)	10 (62.5%)	16
New Hampshire	9 (60%)	6 (40%)	15
New Jersey	24 (85.7%)	4 (14.3%)	28
New York	77 (68.8%)	35 (31.2%)	112
Pennsylvania	82 (75.2%)	27 (24.8%)	109
Rhode Island	7 (87.5%)	1 (12.5%)	8
Vermont	3 (20%)	12 (80%)	15
			[421]

States where the proportion of honors programs is significantly below the regional average, such as Maine and Vermont, generally have a high proportion of small or very small liberal arts colleges. The breakdown above is intended to help us better understand the marketplace for honors in a particular state.

Table 3: Honors by School Type

	With Hons	No Hons	Total
All public 4-year	108 (81.8%)	24 (18.2%)	132
All private NFP 4-year	180 (63.4%)	104 (36.6%)	284
All private for-profit 4-year	0 (0 %)	5 (100%)	5

Honors is most common in public four-year institutions, and, while significantly less common in private not-for-profit institutions, it is still well-represented there. Public universities have long been home to honors programs as they attempt to attract strong students who might otherwise attend prestigious private institutions. Since private colleges tend to include a higher proportion of smaller institutions, it is perhaps not surprising to see fewer honors programs among them.

The trend of greater representation of honors in public than in private institutions is similar to one noted by Long, who reported honors programs in 37.5% of public and 7.8% of private institutions in New England, and in 36% of public and 17.5 % of private institutions in the Middle Atlantic States. Her numbers are considerably lower than those presented here because she depended on the 1997 *Peterson's Guide to Honors Programs*, so she was drawing information from a self-selected population of NCHC member programs that sent information about themselves to the guide. Naturally, that population would be considerably smaller than the one studied here.

In a time of austerity, the existence of honors at a large majority of public institutions in the Northeast might argue for their continued presence and enhancement in any particular public institution. As we might expect from anecdotal evidence, honors is not part of the structure of for-profit colleges and universities in the Northeast.

Table 4: Honors by Carnegie Basic Classification

	With Hons	No Hons	Total
Master's L	97 (85.8%)	16 (14.2%)	113
Master's M	39 (83.0%)	8 (17.0%)	47
Master's S	22 (75.9%)	7 (24.1%)	29
Bacc Arts & Sci	43 (44.8%)	53 (55.2%)	96
Bacc Diverse fields	39 (60%)	26 (40%)	65
Doctoral Rsch	15 (78.9%)	4 (21.1%)	19
Doctoral High Rsch	20 (87.0%)	3 (13.0%)	23
Doctoral Very High Rsch	13 (44.8%)	16 (55.2%)	29
[All doctoral institutions	48 (67.6%)	23 (32.4%)	71]

The Carnegie Basic classifications are due for a revision this year, so these data are likely already out of date, but they illustrate the prevalence of honors at a variety of different kinds of institution. The definitions of these categories are available on the Carnegie Foundation's website. Master's institutions boast the greatest proportion of honors programs (from 75.9 to 85.8%) although this proportion is matched by doctoral research and doctoral high-research institutions. Where the prestige of the institution attracts high-achieving students on its own (as is likely the case in some baccalaureate and some doctoral very-high-research institutions), we see the percentage of honors programs dropping off somewhat. However, in both of these categories, we still see 44.8% of institutions offering an honors program.

Table 5: Honors by Institution Size

	With Hons	No Hons	Total
Very Small	27 (44.3%)	34 (55.7%)	61
Small	114 (65.5%)	60 (34.5%)	174
Medium	113 (80.1%)	28 (19.9%)	141
Large	34 (75.6%)	11 (24.4%)	45

The Carnegie Foundation classifies very small institutions as having fewer than 1,000 students, small institutions as having 1000–2,999, medium institutions as having 3,000–9,999, and large institutions as having more than

10,000 ("Carnegie Classification"). Smaller institutions are less likely to offer an honors program than larger ones, probably because of limits on institutional resources as well as the difficulty of creating a small honors community within an already small student body. A slightly larger proportion of medium institutions than large ones boast an honors program although this difference may not be significant. Some of the larger doctoral very-high-research institutions encourage their students to participate in departmental honors and do not have a centralized honors program, which may be a manifestation of a wider division between general-education-based honors programs and department-based, research-driven honors.

Table 6: Honors by Selectivity

	With Hons	No Hons	Total
Not available	10 (32.3%)	21 (67.7%)	31
Inclusive	52 (71.2%)	21 (28.8%)	73
Selective	149 (83.7%)	29 (16.3%)	178
More Selective	77 (55.4%)	62 (44.6%)	139

The Carnegie classification of selectivity is painted with a broad brush. Inclusive institutions either do not provide first-year test score data or those data indicate that they have a fairly open admissions policy. Selective institutions' first-year-student test scores place them in "roughly the middle two-fifths of baccalaureate institutions." More selective schools have scores that place them in "roughly the top fifth of baccalaureate institutions" ("Carnegie Classification"). This broad definition groups schools such as Harvard and Princeton with schools such as my own, a regional public master's university. Allowing for the roughness of the measure, however, we can see that inclusive and selective schools most often host honors programs, probably because they need honors to attract and retain the best students. That said, this measure is so broad that it likely overlooks distinctions within the categories that may be interesting. Perhaps a future study might consider adding more fine-grained admissions data from IPEDS in order to study the correlation between honors and selectivity.

Table 7: Honors Program Membership in NCHC by Carnegie Basic Classification

	In NCHC	Not in NCHC	Total
All Honors (n=288)	172 (59.7%)	116 (40.3%)	288
Master's L	73 (75.3%)	24 (24.7%)	97
Master's M	25 (64.1%)	14 (35.9%)	39
Master's S	13 (59.1%)	9 (40.9%)	22
Bacc Arts & Sci	12 (27.9%)	31 (72.1%)	43
Bacc Diverse fields	16 (41.0%)	23 (59.0%)	39
Doctoral Rsch	11 (57.9%)	4 (21.1%)	19
Doctoral High Rsch	14 (70.0%)	6 (30.0%)	20
Doctoral Very High Rsch	8 (61.5%)	5 (38.5%)	13
[All doctoral institutions	33 (68.8%)	15 (31.3%)	48]

The proportion of institutions hosting honors programs that are members of the National Collegiate Honors Council is significant because it bears on the perennial debates that take place about honors accreditation and best practices. These discussions will not likely affect institutions that are not members of NCHC. The table above categorizes institutional honors programs by NCHC membership. As it turns out, according to the latest list from NCHC, most four-year schools with honors programs in the Northeast are members. While there is room for more NCHC representation in all basic classification categories, baccalaureate institutions are relatively under-represented, perhaps because of an unwillingness or inability on the part of smaller institutions to pay NCHC dues or to fund student travel to NCHC conferences.

Table 8: Honors College Designation by Carnegie Basic Classification

	Honors Colleges	Other Programs	Total
Total Hons. College Designated	32 (11.1%)	256 (88.9%)	288
Master's L	10 (10.3%)	87 (89.7%)	97
Master's M	2 (5.1%)	37 (94.9%)	39
Master's S	0 (0%)	22 (100%)	22
Bacc Arts & Sci	2 (4.7%)	41 (95.3%)	43
Bacc Diverse fields	0 (0%)	39 (100%)	39
Doctoral Rsch	5 (33.3%)	10 (66.7%)	15
Doctoral High Rsch	6 (30%)	14 (70%)	20
Doctoral Very High Rsch	7 (53.8%)	6 (46.2%)	13

Finally, Table 8 presents us with the number of honors units that are designated as honors colleges rather than honors programs. The rise of honors colleges has been the subject of increasing research. Peter Sederberg provided an initial, selective survey at the national level in the NCHC monograph he edited in 2008, titled *The Honors College Phenomenon*. The data presented above include all four-year honors colleges in the Northeast region and can help us understand where honors colleges tend to reside in the educational market and, over time, to quantify and analyze any changes in their popularity.

DISCUSSION

This study is a simple first step in assembling a body of data on honors in the Northeast. The results presented here are broadly descriptive rather than analytical, bringing together my survey of honors with data from the basic Carnegie classifications. My speculations about institutional funding for honors and the place of honors in the educational marketplace do not yet rise from the realm of anecdote to that of hypothesis, but further analysis might allow for this sort of investigation.

Surveys of this sort can be used and misused for a variety of reasons in the era of data-driven strategic planning. We might limit our studies to exemplary institutions in order to hold up the results as a kind of high standard to which all honors programs or colleges should aspire. We might also carefully choose institutional peers who do worse than we do in some aspects of

honors program assessment in order to show our provosts that our programs are superior. The purpose of this survey, by contrast, is to get an overall understanding of honors as it is, not as it is occasionally idealized or denigrated; I present it as a historian interested in a little-studied aspect of American higher education and as an honors director seeking to understand just how my program fits into the wider scheme of honors education.

This study can be expanded, with assistance, to survey all four-year institutions in the United States and might be the inspiration for a regional or national survey of honors at two-year institutions. I would be happy to work with other honors faculty and students interested in contributing to such projects. Assuming that the Internet does not change drastically in the next decade (perhaps the riskiest assumption made in this paper), I suggest that such a survey be repeated to document changes in honors programs over time. Another way of expanding this survey might be to add data from other sources (such as IPEDS) and to apply various statistical analyses to try to tease out the factors that might predict the likelihood of a given institution having an honors program; this was done by Long although, as mentioned above, she was working from a limited sample. Finally, and most ambitiously, the data gathered here might result in a list of honors deans and directors' e-mail addresses, which could be used to send out a well-designed questionnaire in order to better understand the size, funding, support, and other features of honors programs. Presuming a good participation rate, such a survey could provide much better information about honors than has been available previously. I would be happy to work with others if any reader should think these proposals an interesting research opportunity.

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The author may be contacted at

rkengland@salisbury.edu.

About the Authors

Richard Badenhausen is Professor and Kim T. Adamson Chair at Westminster College, where he has directed the honors program since 2001. A former NCHC Board member, he teaches classes in the humanities, trauma literature, and theories of place. In his non-honors life, he is the author of *T. S. Eliot and the Art of Collaboration* (Cambridge UP, 2004) and is completing a book entitled *T. S. Eliot's Traumatic Texts*.

Amy Beth Cyphert is Program Coordinator for the ASPIRE Office at West Virginia University. Housed in the WVU Honors College, this office helps students preparing to apply for graduate school and advises students competing for nationally competitive scholarships. She earned her undergraduate degrees at Carnegie Mellon University and is a *cum laude* graduate of Harvard Law School. Prior to joining WVU, she practiced law in Manhattan.

Joan Digby is Director of the Honors Program at the C.W. Post Campus of Long Island University and a past president of NCHC. She produced the several editions of *Peterson's Guide to Honors Programs and Colleges* and invented Partners in the Parks, which is the subject of her forthcoming monograph: *Partners in the Parks: Field Guide to an Experiential Program.*

Charles (Jack) Dudley is Professor/Director Emeritus of University Honors at Virginia Tech. He served as honors director from 1990 until 2008. Overseeing a program that annually served 1500 students and involved several hundred faculty members provided a life of rich associations. He continues to teach in honors.

Richard England is Director of the Bellavance Honors Program at Salisbury University (part of the university system of Maryland). He studies Victorian science and religion, particularly post-Darwinian controversies. He is a past president of the Northeast Collegiate Honors Council and has been involved in honors education since 2000.

Keith Garbutt is Dean of the Honors College at West Virginia University and Eberly Family Professor for Outstanding Teaching. He joined the WVU Honors Program as its director in 2000 and became the first dean of the honors college in 2006. Prior to becoming dean, Garbutt was Chair of the Department of Biology. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Wales (Bangor).

Michael Giazzoni is Director of Student Assistantships at the University Honors College of the University of Pittsburgh, where he received his Ph.D. from its Department of Education. He teaches freshman English composition and seminars in the humanities, and his scholarly interests include hermeneutics and academic culture conflicts.

Bonnie D. Irwin, formerly Dean of the Honor College, is now Dean of Arts & Humanities at Eastern Illinois University. She also currently serves as president of NCHC. She is a professor of English and has taught leadership, world mythology, and world literature. Her research interests include the reception of the *1001 Nights* in American pop culture and the writings of Arab American women.

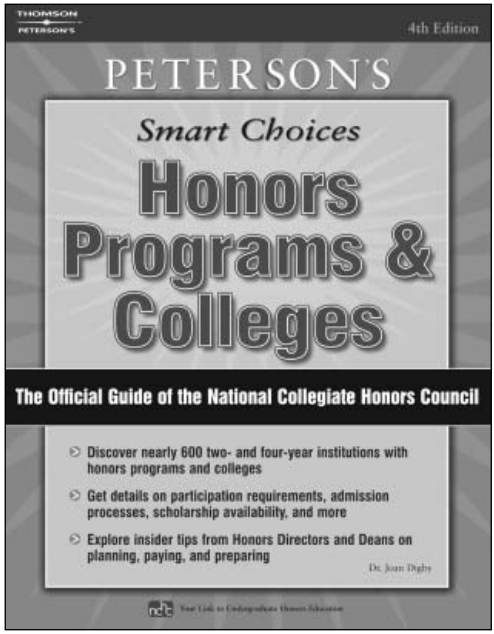
Celia López-Chávez is an associate professor in the University of New Mexico Honors Program. Originally from Argentina, she received her Ph.D. in history and geography from the Universidad de Sevilla (Spain). She teaches seminars on Latin America issues. Her research foci are colonial Latin American history and literature and teaching methodologies.

Eric W. Owens is a professional counselor in Pittsburgh, PA, a Nationally Certified Counselor, and an Approved Clinical Supervisor. He formerly worked in the University of Pittsburgh University Honors College, has taught at the undergraduate and graduate level, and is a doctoral candidate at Duquesne University in Counselor Education and Supervision. He plans to defend his dissertation in spring, 2011. His research has focused on trauma and crisis intervention on college campuses.

Angela M. Salas is Founding Director of the Honors Program at Indiana University Southeast in New Albany, Indiana. She is the author of *Flashback Through the Heart: the Poetry of Yusef Komunyakaa* (Susquehanna UP, 2004). In addition, she is a member of the NCHC's Finance Committee and Assessment and Evaluation Committee.

Ursula L. Shepherd is an associate professor in the University of New Mexico Honors Program. Her Ph.D. is in biology, and she has an M.A. in social sciences. She is an ecologist and biogeographer, and she teaches science classes for both majors and non-majors. She was the recipient of the 2009–2011 UNM Presidential Teaching Award.

Margaret Walsh is Professor of Sociology at Keene State College and Director of the Honors Program. Her research explores social inequalities and family changes in rural communities in the United States. She also leads an interdisciplinary course to Nicaragua where students engage in educational projects on a farming cooperative.



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- A Handbook for Honors Programs at Two-Year Colleges
- Honors Programs at Smaller Colleges (2nd Ed.)
- Inspiring Exemplary Teaching and Learning: Perspectives on Teaching Academically Talented College Students

NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL MONOGRAPHS & JOURNALS

Assessing and Evaluating Honors Programs and Honors Colleges: A Practical Handbook by Rosalie Otero and Robert Spurrier (2005, 98pp). This monograph includes an overview of assessment and evaluation practices and strategies. It explores the process for conducting self-studies and discusses the differences between using consultants and external reviewers. It provides a guide to conducting external reviews along with information about how to become an NCHC-Recommended Site Visitor. A dozen appendices provide examples of "best practices."

Beginning in Honors: A Handbook by Samuel Schuman (Fourth Edition, 2006, 80pp). Advice on starting a new honors program. Covers budgets, recruiting students and faculty, physical plant, administrative concerns, curriculum design, and descriptions of some model programs.

Fundrai$ing for Honor$: A Handbook by Larry R. Andrews (2009, 160pp). Offers information and advice on raising money for honors, beginning with easy first steps and progressing to more sophisticated and ambitious fundraising activities.

A Handbook for Honors Administrators by Ada Long (1995, 117pp). Everything an honors administrator needs to know, including a description of some models of honors administration.

A Handbook for Honors Programs at Two-Year Colleges by Theresa James (2006, 136pp). A useful handbook for two-year schools contemplating beginning or redesigning their honors program and for four-year schools doing likewise or wanting to increase awareness about two-year programs and articulation agreements. Contains extensive appendices about honors contracts and a comprehensive bibliography on honors education.

Honors Composition: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Practices by Annmarie Guzy (2003, 182pp). Parallel historical developments in honors and composition studies; contemporary honors writing projects ranging from admission essays to theses as reported by over 300 NCHC members.

Honors Programs at Smaller Colleges by Samuel Schuman (Second Edition, 1999, 53pp). How to implement an honors program, with particular emphasis on colleges with fewer than 3000 students.

Inspiring Exemplary Teaching and Learning: Perspectives on Teaching Academically Talented College Students edited by Larry Clark and John Zubizarreta (2008, 216pp). This rich collection of essays offers valuable insights into innovative teaching and significant learning in the context of academically challenging classrooms and programs. The volume provides theoretical, descriptive, and practical resources, including models of effective instructional practices, examples of successful courses designed for enhanced learning, and a list of online links to teaching and learning centers and educational databases worldwide.

Partners in the Parks: A Field Guide to an Experiential Program in the National Parks by Joan Digby with reflective essays on theory and practice by student and faculty participants and National Park Service personnel (2010, 272pp). This monograph explores an experiential-learning program that fosters immersion in and stewardship of the national parks. The topics include program designs, group dynamics, philosophical and political issues, photography, wilderness exploration, and assessment.

Place as Text: Approaches to Active Learning edited by Bernice Braid and Ada Long (Second Edition, 2010, 128pp). Updated theory, information, and advice on experiential pedagogies developed within NCHC during the past 35 years, including Honors Semesters and City as Text™, along with suggested adaptations to multiple educational contexts.

Setting the Table for Diversity edited by Lisa L. Coleman and Jonathan D. Kotinek (2010, 288pp). This collection of essays provides definitions of diversity in honors, explores the challenges and opportunities diversity brings to honors education, and depicts the transformative nature of diversity when coupled with equity and inclusion. These essays discuss African American, Latina/o, international, and first-generation students as well as students with disabilities. Other issues include experiential and service learning, the politics of diversity, and the psychological resistance to it. Appendices relating to NCHC member institutions contain diversity statements and a structural diversity survey.

Shatter the Glassy Stare: Implementing Experiential Learning in Higher Education edited by Peter A. Machonis (2008, 160pp). A companion piece to *Place as Text*, focusing on recent, innovative applications of City as Text™ teaching strategies. Chapters on campus as text, local neighborhoods, study abroad, science courses, writing exercises, and philosophical considerations, with practical materials for instituting this pedagogy.

Teaching and Learning in Honors edited by Cheryl L. Fuiks and Larry Clark (2000, 128pp). Presents a variety of perspectives on teaching and learning useful to anyone developing new or renovating established honors curricula.

Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council (***JNCHC***) is a semi-annual periodical featuring scholarly articles on honors education. Articles may include analyses of trends in teaching methodology, articles on interdisciplinary efforts, discussions of problems common to honors programs, items on the national higher education agenda, and presentations of emergent issues relevant to honors education.

Honors in Practice (***HIP***) is an annual journal that accommodates the need and desire for articles about nuts-and-bolts practices by featuring practical and descriptive essays on topics such as successful honors courses, suggestions for out-of-class experiences, administrative issues, and other topics of interest to honors administrators, faculty, and students.

National Collegiate Honors Council
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
1100 Neihardt Residence Center
540 N. 16th St.
Lincoln, NE 68588-0627

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